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49. 1666.

49. 1666.

THE CHRISTIAN INDEED.

THE CHRISTIAN INDEED;

OR,

THE LORD'S PRAYER EXPOUNDED.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM TAIT,

INCUMBENT OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, WAKEFIELD.

AUTHOR OF "EXPOSITION OF THE HEBREWS," &c.

"BEHOLD! HE PRAYETH."—Acts ix. 11.

Seeleys.

FLEET STREET AND HANOVER STREET;

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L. SEELEY, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.

TO

THE CONGREGATION

OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH,

AS THE EXPRESSION OF

HIS MOST EARNEST DESIRE AND PRAYER

THAT THEY AND THEIR CHILDREN MAY BE

CHRISTIANS INDEED;

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS DEDICATED,

BY THEIR

AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND MINISTER

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

The favourable reception which my work on the Hebrews has met with, has encouraged me again to attempt something for the edification of the Church. Like that work, the present little volume is the result of patient and earnest meditation on the blessed word of God; it was also delivered in substance from the pulpit before being committed to the press. It is now presented affectionately to "all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," in the hope that this attempt to expound His words of heavenly wisdom, may prove at once conducive to His glory and to the spiritual benefit of His people.

I was led to the selection of its name from the Redeemer's salutation of Nathanael, "Behold *an Israelite indeed*, in whom is no guile."* There were those who were Jews outwardly; the sacred name of the God of Israel was upon them, but they knew Him not. There was a circumcision which was "outward in the flesh," the mere external sign of an external relation to God. But there were also those who were Jews inwardly—who knew the God of Abraham and feared his holy name. And there was a circumcision of the heart, "in the spirit and not in the letter" —the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, and the crucifying the old man with his lusts, that God might be served and glorified. To this latter class Nathanael belonged; they were *Israelites indeed*, their "praise was not of men but of God."† Now the same distinctions may be made at the present hour. There are those who are Christians outwardly; the sacred name of the Holy Trinity is upon

* John i. 47. † Rom. ii. 28, 29.

them, but they know not God. And there is a baptism which is outward in the flesh—which unbelief has made the mere external sign of a disregarded filial covenant. But there are also those who are Christians inwardly—who are one with Christ and Christ with them, who have learned to look to His Father as their Father, to His God as their God. And there is a baptism "of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter," the real affusion of the Holy Ghost on the soul, and the experienced benediction of His heavenly washing. These are in the present dispensation what Nathanael was in that which preceded. They are *Christians indeed,* and their "praise is not of men but of God."

This leads to a further analogy between the Jewish and Christian dispensations. God took the seed of Abraham into His covenant while yet in unconscious infancy. And as the reason, the understanding and the will were developed, some were found to return His love, whilst over others He had cause to mourn;—"I have

nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." * But a most important end was accomplished by this dealing. The circumcision of the disobedient was a standing testimony against them, that they were trampling on covenant-mercy; whilst the obedient and faithful were reminded by the same ordinance, that they had nothing to glory in—that God had loved them first. Now God's mode of dealing with us is the same, and the purpose which it accomplishes, is also the same. While yet in unconscious infancy, we are received into the covenant of His love. As the reason and will are developed, the majority, alas, wander from Him in the paths of vanity and sin; a few only, taught by His grace, return His love and serve Him. But holy baptism glorifies God in both—"in them that are saved, and in them that perish." † For it makes manifest of the latter, that their perdition is of themselves, and discovering their sin to be a trampling on covenant-mercy,

* Isaiah i. 3. † 2 Cor. ii. 16.

announces it worthy of eternal death; it reminds the former that before they began to serve Him, God was declared their God. The hoary-headed saint who has served Him from the very dawn of reason, may perchance sometimes be tempted to imagine that he has deserved something at the Almighty's hand. But to quell the rising suggestion, it is sufficient just to ask him, *When* were you baptized, and *what* did your baptism signify? You were baptized when you knew not your right hand from your left; it was declared in that hour that God loved you with a Father's affection; and can you deserve more? "*Where is boasting then? It is excluded.*" *

And this dealing of God with His people, besides being instructive, is full of ineffable consolation, and reveals Him who has adopted it, as "the God of the families of Israel." † For a large proportion of our offspring die in infancy or nonage, and if there were no connection with Christ save through the exercise

* Rom. iii. 27. † Jer. xxxiii. 1.

of personal faith, in what way, I ask in the name of mercy, could these little ones possibly be saved? Shall we say that they are innocent and therefore fit for Heaven? To advance this plea for them in the awful presence of DEATH is to charge unrighteousness on God. For the manacles, the dungeon and the scaffold, are not more certain signs of guilt and amenableness to human law than death reigning over all is the sign of universal condemnation, universal amenableness to the broken law of God.* And this condemnation must be removed—this doom must be reversed, before any child of Adam, whether infant or adult, can attain to eternal life. The necessity, moreover, that in infants and adults alike this earthly tabernacle should be dissolved, proves all to be spiritually leprous,† and to need cleansing from on high. And if this condemnation can be removed only through a Saviour's blood, if this cleansing can be obtained only through His heavenly washing,

* Rom. v. 12—14. † Lev. xiv. 43—45.

how unutterably consoling is the ordinance of holy baptism! For the child is then brought to Christ, and Christ is then given by God's own act, to the child; "the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of adoption by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed." * Is it the will of God to remove the child afterwards, in infancy or in nonage? We can commit it into His hands without doubt of its salvation; we know that He bestowed these benefits, we know also that the recipient *was incapable of rejecting them*, we therefore conclude assuredly that they are its possession for ever. "Baptism," says Dr. Chalmers, speaking of a deceased infant, "was impressed on it as a seal; and as a sign it was never falsified." He then goes on to explain in what way it was never falsified. "There was no positive unbelief in its little heart, no resistance put forth to the truth, no love at all for the darkness rather than the light, nor had it yet fallen into that great

* Twenty-seventh Article.

condemnation which will attach to all who perish because of unbelief,—that their deeds are evil." * And though instead of an early removal, the child should grow to years, and when grown to years, should be the servant of sin and Satan, nothing is invalidated of all that has just been advanced. The act of God in baptism is not made a whit less real, but the case, alas, is this—the recipient of baptismal mercy has lived to put it from him. This opens an awful view of the responsibilities of the baptized and of their fearful guilt while living far from God. It is not that they are neglecting to perform some condition which God has annexed to the bestowal of salvation; *that* were a responsibility of a far inferior kind. It is that God has already without any condi-

* It by no means follows from this, that where baptism cannot be had, the infant cannot be saved. CHRIST, not baptism, is the Saviour. And His grace is not confined to an ordinance, as the case of the thief on the Cross among adults, incontestably proves. Without therefore daring to neglect His injunction, we may safely leave all infants in His merciful hands; in instituting holy baptism, He declares both His power and His will to save them.

tion, bestowed salvation in Christ, and that they are deliberately putting that salvation away. For now, alas, as of old, it is *God's people* that will not hearken to His voice; Israel will have none of Him.*

There is a close connection between these demonstrations and the contents of this little work. For while all the baptized are entitled to the name of Christians because of their connection with Christ and part in the covenant of God, *it* is designed to exhibit the character of the Christian indeed, i. e. of the man who has not received this "grace of God in vain."† And that the Lord's prayer does indeed exhibit his character, the very least consideration will shew. The first name in the baptismal covenant—the name of "the Father" declares God's paternal love; the first words in the prayer—"Our Father," are the believing recognition of that love. The second name in the covenant—the name of "the Son," declares with equal plainness that Christ

* Psalm lxxxi. 11. † 2 Cor. vi. 1.

receives us to Himself, that He makes over to us the virtue of His blood and righteousness, and gives us the standing of sons of God. And the language, "Our Father" is the recognition of this mercy as that which gives us boldness to approach the Majesty of Heaven. The third name in the covenant—"the Holy Ghost," declares the blessed Spirit freely given to us, that He may abide in our hearts for ever. And this entire prayer, at once in its opening address and in every one of its petitions, is, as we shall see hereafter, the breathing of the Spirit of adoption, the language of a heart in which the Holy Ghost is dwelling. To pray the Lord's prayer aright then, is to enter into the reality of our baptism—to call on Him as a Father whom baptism proclaims a Father, to draw near into His presence with the conscious boldness of adoption, to open our hearts that we may be filled with His Holy Spirit. We shall assuredly realize, as we learn these sacred lessons, the faith, hope and love, the devotedness to God and deadness to

the world, the spirit of tender mercy, the self-distrust and the dread of sin of which this little work makes mention, as the essentials of the Christian character. And we shall not only realize them in ourselves, but shew them forth to others, treading the earth with "erected look" as the heirs of the everlasting kingdom—as those who remember what shall be their glorious condition when the day of the manifestation of the sons of God is come.

THERE are two things which we especially need to know—the character of the Christian, and how this character is formed; the first of these branches of knowledge is insufficient without the second. This appears to me the defect of many works which, in other respects, are excellent. They describe the Christian's character, his present privileges and future hopes with great truth and beauty, but they leave their readers to inquire anxiously and in vain—how shall all this be realized in us, how shall we find admittance within this hallowed circle? I have endeavoured in this little

work, to keep both these things before the reader's mind;—to shew him on the one hand what a Christian is, and to point out to him on the other, how he may share immediately in all the Christian's present blessedness, and in all his glorious hopes. The way is open for all, and for all equally. Jesus is that way; in simply recognizing what God has done for us in Him, and being encouraged thereby to seek His blessed face, we find a Father's love and mercy waiting to receive and bless us.

It is the more important to remove ignorance on this latter point, because it leads to serious and often fatal misapprehension. Men are told of what the Saviour has done—that there is entrance into the holiest by His blood —that the love, the mercy and the promises of God are pressed along with Him, on their immediate acceptance. But all this is neutralized by the feeling which is instantly present to the mind: these gospel-privileges are for *true believers only,* and we may not hope to possess them till we can say that this character

is ours. Many religious works, I regret to say, rather foster this feeling than remove it, and the results are most disastrous. If men are in earnest about salvation, it acts in one of two ways. It stirs up some to strive earnestly after the attainment of the character to which they suppose the privileges are annexed; it leads others to congratulate themselves that they have already attained it. The labour of the former class is an effort *to create a father,* and can therefore never be successful; and after a time, wearied out by disappointment, they sink down into settled indifference and unbelief. Among the latter class on the other hand, there are many self-deceivers; many who, on grounds which are utterly futile, imagine that they are possessed of true faith, and say peace to their souls when in reality there is none. And even when this is not the case, where there is some knowledge of Christ, and some degree of Christian excellence attained, self-righteousness comes in as a canker at the root of all. For the attention

is withdrawn from Christ the object of faith, to be fixed on faith itself; its possession and not His work, our own character and not His merits, becomes our confidence in the presence of God. And had we all the zeal and devotedness of the Apostle Paul, this alone were sufficient to destroy it.

Is faith after all then unnecessary, and notwithstanding all the encomiums bestowed on it in Holy Scripture, have we really no cause to be anxious after, or to congratulate ourselves on its possession? Is the eye unnecessary because it is not the Sun? Faith is indeed necessary; no man can be saved without it, neither without it can any man please God. But what is faith? It is the eye that sees THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, the heart that apprehends and confides in THE LORD JESUS, the hand that handles THE BLESSED WORD OF LIFE.* It is described in our Absolution-Service, as an unfeigned believing of God's holy gospel. But

* 1 John i. 1, 2.

that holy gospel is a message of love, not to believers but *to men*; a proclamation of pardoning mercy, not to believers but *to men*; a revelation of paternal grace, not to believers but *to men*. Believers are those who sincerely welcome these glad tidings of great joy; who flee for refuge to God's mercy, and put their trust under the shadow of His wings; who seek the blessed face of Him whom Calvary reveals as a Father. To say then that these glad tidings are not for us, and that we may not rejoice in them till we have first ascertained that we have unfeigned faith, is to delay believing till we find that we have believed. For unfeigned faith is nothing save the hearty reception of these tidings. As long as we do unfeignedly receive them, believing in God's love because Calvary reveals it, confiding in His pardoning mercy because the blood of His Son has obtained it, and looking up to Him as a Father because the gospel announces Him as such, this faith is in living and healthy exercise. But it is nothing with-

out its object, and therefore ceases instantly whenever it is put in Christ's place, and made the confidence of the soul for eternity. If GOD is to be loved, served and glorified, HE HIMSELF and HE ALONE must be the object of the entire and unreserved confidence of the heart. The paramount importance of this truth cannot possibly be overrated; it has been continually present with me in writing, may it be commended to the reader also by the teaching of the Spirit of truth!

IT were unseemly to conclude these prefatory remarks without a word of acknowledgment to a living writer. This work was designed originally to consist of seven chapters only, and was already passing through the press in that form, when Mr. Maurice's work on the same subject, was put into my hands.* I read it with the attention which such a work deserves, and very soon found that it had borne fruit in my mind, opening up new

* Nine Sermons on the Lord's Prayer, by F. D. Maurice, M. A., Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn.

avenues of thought, and presenting truth in new aspects. The issue was, that I added to the work what now appears as the seventh chapter. The superficial reader may see no likeness between that chapter and what Mr. Maurice has written, but this is the excellence of works of real thought—they suggest ideas which lead us on to further discoveries of our own. Let me also express the gratification which I feel in having all the views which I have expressed in the other chapters of this little volume, so fully confirmed by such a writer. I allude especially to what I have set forth in the eighth chapter, on the Incarnation of the Saviour and His condition in mortal flesh. It is really refreshing to find this great and blessed truth—a truth little meditated, and less understood, explained so fully, scripturally and distinctly, as it is in the pages of his most valuable work.

Let me only say in conclusion, that if by God's blessing on the reading of this little volume, a single human being is led to seek

His face, to confide in Him as a Father in Christ Jesus, and to prove the blessedness of prayer; or if the least of the Saviour's little ones is comforted and cheered by it in any hour of sorrow and calamity, I shall render "most humble and hearty thanks" to that mercy which has permitted me to write it. And let us all remember that it is neither our Church-membership nor our Evangelical creed that saves us; salvation is a matter of the heart, it is being made nigh to God, it is conscious communion with an unseen but spiritually present Saviour. Oh that both our hearts and homes were temples of that blessed presence, and that we felt something of the sacred spirit that breathes in Montgomery's lines—

"Come to the Morning prayer,
Come, let us kneel and pray;
Prayer is the Christian pilgrim's staff,
To walk with God all day.

At noon, beneath the rock
Of ages, rest and pray;
Sweet is that shadow from the heat,
When the sun smites by day.

At eve, shut to the door,
Round the home-altar pray,
And finding there the house of God,
At heaven's gate, close the day.

When midnight seals our eyes,
Oh it is good to say,
I sleep, but my heart waketh, Lord,
With Thee to watch and pray!"

Wakefield,
January, 1849.

THE LORD'S PRAYER EXPOUNDED.

THE SUBJECT INTRODUCED.

"And it came to pass, that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in Heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."—LUKE XI. 1—4.

THE disciples saw on this occasion, the most marvellous sight, with the exception of Calvary alone, to which the world was ever witness, *the Lord of glory praying*. They saw that head bent in lowly supplication which the crown of universal empire now adorns; they saw those hands clasped, which now hold

the sceptre of dominion; they saw Him kneeling to whom every knee shall bow. They listened in reverence whilst His devotion lasted; they presumed not to interrupt by any request of theirs that high and holy communion with the invisible Father, of which they were the privileged spectators. But "when He ceased," one of them approached and said in the name of the rest, Lord, *Thou* hast been praying, and *we too* would know how to pray, teach us then the sacred lesson. He granted their request. Prayer is drawing near to God, and He taught them to draw near to Him as a Father. Prayer is asking God for things agreeable to His will; He taught them what these things were, and put corresponding petitions into their mouths. What He thus taught them to do, was moreover what He had just been doing. *Abba Father,* was the language of His own devotion; * He had also come into the world, was then living in the world, and was soon about

* Matt. xxvi. 39. 42. Mark xiv. 36. Luke xxii. 42.

to die for the promotion of *those very objects* to which the petitions of this prayer have reference. We cannot doubt that in teaching them, He meant to teach us also; let us then be instructed by this precious scripture, in the character of real prayer. It is *fellowship with God,* for it is drawing near to God as He is, and asking what is according to His will. It is *fellowship with Christ,* for it is drawing near as Christ drew near—with the language of Christ in our mouths, with the desires of Christ on our lips. We may say of it therefore, in the words of the beloved Apostle, that it is "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." * True prayer is the breathing of such fellowship, and nothing to which a lower character belongs, deserves this sacred name. To point out what this fellowship is, and to trace it in detail through all the principles of the Christian character, is the object of this little volume.

* 1 John i. 3.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN'S FAITH AND HOPE.

"When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven."

LET us observe these words; they take the form of a command, not of a petition; they occur at the commencement, not at the conclusion of the prayer. This is all-important. If Christ had taught us to pray that God might become our Father, we should have been led to suppose that our supplications procured this mercy. But He forbids us to think so, by teaching us at once to call Him Father. Again, if this sacred name had occurred at the end of the prayer, we might

have supposed that the amazing grace which it reveals, was in some way or other, the reward of that obedience which is inseparable from a life of supplication. But it occurs at the commencement, as the encouragement to supplication, the foundation of communion with God, and the spring of filial obedience. For let us observe how Christ proceeds, when He would encourage us to pray. "Ask," He says, "and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened to you; for every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." And why is this—why should it be the rule of heaven that to ask is to receive, to seek is to find, to knock is to gain instant admittance? Because, as the Saviour goes on to tell us, when we ask, it is of *a Father;* when we seek, it is from *a Father's hand,* when we knock, it is at *a Father's door.** When God gave the law on Mount Sinai, He proclaimed to Israel

* Luke xi. 9—13.

"I am the Lord thy God." He did not proclaim this at *the end* of the law, as if His being so was future and the reward of his people's obedience. For it was very far otherwise. He was so before they began to obey; nay, before they were brought into existence, He had sworn to their father Abraham, that He would be their God. He proclaimed this gracious character therefore at *the beginning* of the law, that His people knowing Him, might have confidence to approach, might be encouraged to love, to serve, and to fear Him. And as it was with the grace of the God of Israel, so it is with the grace of the gospel of Christ; it does not tarry till our prayers purchase it, or till our obedience deserves it. It cannot indeed be purchased, it cannot be deserved. For it is the peculiar glory of *a father's* love—unlike in this particular, the love either of husband or of friend, that in the very nature of things, it precedes all worthiness in its object. And therefore we know assuredly (if nature be the exponent of reve-

lation) that the love, the mercy, the everlasting kindness which the paternal name of the Most High expresses, are THE SPONTANEOUS MANIFESTATION OF THE BLESSED GOD HIMSELF.

Let us next inquire into the import of the name under which the Most High is thus revealed to us. No depth of research is needful to unfold it; the word *Father* is universally understood; the civilized and the savage, the learned and the unlearned, the wise and the unwise, alike and intuitively apprehend its meaning. Human nature answers to the poet's words, when he presents to us a daughter greeting her returning sire,—

> "*Father*,—she cried; the rocks around
> Lov'd to prolong *the gentle sound*."

For it is indeed a gentle sound; it is in every language under Heaven the very symbol of love, of mercy, and of tenderness. To ask a child, *Does your father love you*, is a question against nature; he who does not love his child, usurps the appellation of Father.

To ask him, *To whom would you betake yourself, were you in difficulty, danger or distress,* is a question which nature renders needless; the parental bosom is the child's natural resting-place, the parental arms are his natural shelter. Does the philanthropist seek to comfort some poor orphan's heart, by assuring him of a love which will watch over and protect him, and of a merciful kindness which will supply all his wants? It is sufficient just to say, I will be *a father* to you. That one word includes *all*—love, mercy, bountiful provision, every thing which the child can ask, every thing which goodness can render. Evil as we are, such is our paternal character, and such are our gifts to our children. How simple then, how beautiful, how easy of understanding are the words of Christ, when He bids us draw near to God, saying, "Our Father, which art in Heaven!" We have only to translate the ideas which this sacred name suggests, from man to God, from earth to heaven, to have the Most High revealed to

us—revealed to us as One in whose love we may confide, to whose mercy we may betake ourselves, on whom we may cast all our care for soul and body, for time and for eternity, assured that he careth for us.

But we have not yet exhausted the meaning of this most comprehensive though familiar name. *A Father* is one who has communicated life to those who call him so; and the life which he has communicated, is *his own*. Let us look at a family upon earth, as they dwell together in the common home, assemble round the common hearth, and sit together at the common board. We see a life communicated on the one hand and received on the other, and that life is one. The Father and his children have the same bodily powers, the same mental faculties, the same moral affections. They breathe the same air, they are nourished by the same food, they are refreshed by the same sleep. The life which is in both, is moreover liable to be invaded by the same diseases, to be interrupted by the same casual-

ties. And as a last and fatal proof of unity, it underlies the same sentence, being destined, in father and children alike, to end in death and the grave. This unity of life, be it also observed, is essential to the paternal relation; if we could by possibility destroy it, we should along with it, destroy paternity itself. And as it is with man, so it is with the blessed God. He must communicate to us *His own life*—the fellowship of His purity and immortality, before we can intelligently call him Father. To address Him by this sacred and endearing name, is therefore to say that He has done so—that we have tasted the sweets of communion with His holiness, that we have received from Him that life which cannot die.

If such then be the import of the name *Father*—if it imply love and mercy on the one hand, and unity of life on the other, how shall we learn to approach the Most High as the Redeemer here directs us? Is it sufficient for this end that we contemplate Him as creation and providence reveal Him? The

sentimental religionist will tell us that it is. He will remind us that God is the author of our being, that He has preserved us all our life-long unto this day, that He has given us all the comforts we enjoy, the health, the substance, the children, the friends, the ten thousand mercies which render life agreeable. He will bid us think on these things or even look around on the fair landscapes of nature, and remember whose work they are—whose "unwearied love" has "planned and built and still upholds a world, so clothed with beauty." He will ask us if we can do so without seeing the love of God, and being persuaded of His merciful remembrance; he will inquire with astonishment, what other warrant is or can be necessary to embolden us to lift our eyes to Him as our gracious Father above. But in speaking thus, he greatly errs. For while these things are true, they are only a portion of the truth, one side of a picture, whose reverse is carefully concealed. It is indeed true that God is the Author of our

being, but it is equally true that he turns man to destruction.* It is indeed true that He has preserved us unto this day; but for what has He preserved us? "All flesh is grass," says the Apostle, "and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:"†—falleth into the grave, for *that* is the end of all human health and strength, all man's glory, enterprise and hope. He does indeed give us health, substance, children and friends, but He as often withdraws them. Health is exchanged for pining sickness, substance is exchanged for poverty, the society of children and friends for the loneliness and desolation of bereavement. And the hand that thus empties, smites and bereaves, is the very hand that filled, the very hand that so lately blessed. We do indeed dwell on the face of God's lovely world, and breathe the blessed air of heaven, and both are eloquent of love. But how often is that air charged with pestilence, so that it

* Psalm xc. 3. † 1 Peter i. 24, 25.

passes over us, and we are gone! * How often is the lovely face of nature deformed and obscured by the hurricane and the earthquake, God's commissioned messengers of death! What shall we say then to these things? We are dumb, and open not the mouth; we cannot recognise the Father in the destroyer. Creation and providence are thus an insufficient, because they are a contradictory, manifestation of God. They speak now of love, again of wrath; now of mercy, again of a determined purpose to destroy. And to the awfully anxious question, shall love prevail to turn wrath aside—shall mercy swallow up displeasure, and turn again to bless us?—to this question, I say, they return *no answer*, but leave us to doubt, amazement and uncertainty.

And if unity of life is essential to paternity, it is yet more evident that creation and providence do not reveal God as a Father. For creation does not communicate, neither does

* Psalm ciii. 16.

providence sustain in us the blessed life of God. Our understandings are by nature blinded, and our hearts are hard; we go astray as soon as we are born, inclined to evil and averse to good, the slaves of passion and of sin. And these features, assuredly, do not reveal a divine original—do not declare us to be the children of the pure and holy One. No; His pure and holy image is wanting, and the image of the Father marks the child. Again, our present life is a frail and sickly existence, like the gourd that is the growth of yesterday. It is the sport of every accident, and the prey of every disease; it underlies the certain sentence of decay and death. Let us compare it with the life of God. That life stretches from eternity to eternity, and is infinitely secure against all accident, all approach of disease or decay, all possible termination. Is there any likeness? Alas, there is none. Yet this present life is all that creation has given, all that providence sustains. Their revelations then are utterly

insufficient to enable us to lift our eyes to heaven, saying, "Our Father." For He who dwells in heaven, is the holy and everliving God, and we are the sinful children of yesterday, whose home shall be in the dust to-morrow.

But redemption comes in where creation and providence fail—comes in with its glorious promises, and yet more glorious fulfilments, revealing God's fatherly mercy, and communicating eternal life. Let us contemplate for a moment the first scene that was enacted in our fallen world, when God spake with man in Eden just after man had transgressed. He pronounced then the primeval sentence on our race, and subjected us to the endurance of those very ills under which we are now daily groaning. For He cursed the ground for man's sake, and doomed him to eat of it in sorrow; He appointed to woman the pangs and dangers of childbirth; He declared that the grave should be the resting-place of them and their children together, that what had been

originally dust should return to dust again. Yet, lest these things should tempt us to misconceive Him, He revealed even at this awful moment, a love which should prevail against wrath, a mercy which should swallow up displeasure, and turn again to bless us; a fatherly grace which should be a ground of hope in this world, and bring us at last to eternal life in a better world to come. This assurance of mercy to man was conveyed in His sentence on the serpent; our tempter's head was to be bruised, and the woman's seed was to bruise it.* A mightier than he was to take flesh of our flesh, was to appear as our champion and to destroy the works of our enemy.† That enemy's great work was then only just accomplished. By prevailing with man to sin against God, he had cut off the human spirit from the blessedness of Divine communion, and destroyed that Divine image which by nature was imprinted on it; He had also brought under the power of death that body which was des-

* Gen. iii. 15. † 1 John iii. 8.

imprinted on it; He had also brought under the power of death that body which was destined for immortality. But all this was to be undone. The image of God was to be restored to man; the body which had been destined for immortality, was to be raised from the dust, immortal; the sorrows of a moment were to be forgotten in the fulness of eternal bliss. Such were the assurances of Eden. They began to be fulfilled when the Son of God, in the fulness of time, appeared as the Son of Mary; when He died for us on the accursed tree and lay down also in our grave; when He rose again, crowned with immortality, and ascended to the right hand of God. And they shall be fulfilled completely when He comes the second time, raising from the dead the whole company of those who have trusted in Him, and receiving them to Himself for ever.*

In these four mighty acts of the Saviour—THE INCARNATION, THE CROSS, THE RESUR-

* John xiv. 3.

RECTION, THE SECOND APPEARING, the work of redemption consists. Three of them are past, and are the objects of the Christian's FAITH; the fourth is yet future, and is the object of his stedfast HOPE. God's sacred name of FATHER is written on them all.

It is written on THE CROSS. There is one whom I would fain regard as a friend, but I stand in doubt of his sincerity. He has done many kind things for me, but many also which appear unkind, and as I balance the one with the other, I can scarcely tell what his feelings really are. But calamity overtakes me—my life is forfeited; he steps in at once and gives his life for mine. Can I doubt now the reality of his friendship? No; his lifeless form, as it lies at my feet, is a demonstration which puts all doubt to flight. I now see that his unkindness was apparent only, that what seemed unreasonable severity, was prompted by sincere affection, and designed for my real welfare. But was such love ever heard of on earth—did man ever thus give himself for

man? It has been heard of; virtuous friendship even in heathen lands has prompted the generous sacrifice,—the friend has died to save his friend from death. "Scarcely for a righteous man," says St. Paul, "will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." * And there is a love in human bosoms which will go farther still, and give itself even for the worthless. We can scarcely conceive any one more thoroughly abandoned than was Absalom. And yet when Absalom died, and all were rejoicing that the guilty had perished, one was heard to exclaim, "Would God I had died for thee!" † It was *a father* who spake; the guilty one was his child. "Dost thou mourn thus for rebellious Absalom," was the question of haughty Joab; but king David only answered, "*My son, my son!*" Now it is even thus between man and his offended God. We contemplate the Most High as Creation and Providence reveal Him, but His dealings towards us are of a charac-

* Rom. v. 7. † 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

ter so mingled as to leave us in most painful doubt. Conscience also tells us that we deserve no love; it testifies plainly that we have forfeited all claim to mercy. But we repair to Calvary, and take our station by the cross of Jesus. And we read written there, in letters of everlasting light, "Hereby perceive we the love of God; *He laid down His life for us.*" * All doubt of that love is in a moment put to flight for ever. He is our Father, we exclaim, looking reverently and devoutly upwards—who, save a father only, would have given His life that His worthless offspring might be saved from dying? The severities of His providence cannot proceed from unkindness; there is no unkindness in Him whom this bitter cross reveals. Neither can we regard them as the outpouring of penal wrath, the begun execution of a sentence of eternal displeasure. For this precious blood has turned penal wrath away, and even now speaks peace to our consciences by assuring us of forgiving

* 1 John iii. 16.

mercy. They must, we say, be blessings in disguise, the parental discipline of One who is as wise as He is gracious *—the tribulation that is designed to work patience, experience and hope †—the light affliction of a moment, sent to prepare for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.‡ We learn thus to drink the cup of sorrow cheerfully. For so far from tempting us now to doubt the love of God, every succeeding affliction, seen in the light of Calvary, is a fresh manifestation of that love. He who gave Himself for us there, shews that He loves us still, for He chastens while there is hope, and spares not for our crying.

And in thus apprehending God as our Father in Christ Jesus, we receive from Him that life which makes us indeed His children. This life was poured into our nature when Jesus became flesh of our flesh, taking manhood into God by the wondrous act, and enduing it with the capacity of serving and

* Heb. xii. 6—11. † Rom. v. 2—5. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

glorifying God. And the mystery of the holy INCARNATION was thus the adoption of humanity—it raised it to the dignity of Divine sonship, it declared our nature capable of being filled with God's own life. It was moreover demonstrated in Christ, that this life was indestructible and eternal. For though He gave Himself to die, death had no dominion over Him; and though He lay down in the grave, it was for a season only, for the grave was not able to hold Him. The Father raised the man Christ Jesus from the tomb, crowned Him with immortality, and exalted Him to His own right hand. And this glorious act of RESURRECTION reveals Him as a Father to us. For it demonstrates the eternity of the life which He has given us in His Son. Death cannot destroy, neither can the grave hold it; it shall endure as God's own life, when both death and the grave are no more. We are made partakers of this life, I repeat, when we are led to Calvary and there taught to know our Father who is in heaven.

"Father," said the Lord Jesus, "this is life eternal,—that they might know Thee." * And again an Apostle testifies that "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." † For when the risen Saviour has opened our hearts by His Spirit, to receive the testimony of the Father concerning Him, to put our trust in the love that sent Him to die, and in the mercy which has accepted His sacrifice, He comes into these opened hearts and takes up His abode in them for ever.‡ We are conscious also of His sacred presence, of His sanctifying and quickening power. He enlightens the understanding, He raises the affections to God, He purifies the motives, He renews the whole inner man. This is power to become the sons of God, for it is the communication of the life of God, of the fellowship of our Father's purity, that we may be capable of the communion of children. And

* John xvii. 3. † Ib. i. 12. ‡ Rev. iii. 20.

made capable of this communion, we have also the blessed consciousness that we are raised to the fellowship of our Father's immortality. For faith tells us that we have received God's own life—a life which no accident can interrupt, which no disease can possibly assail, which death itself cannot destroy. These things kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Yea, though they kill the body, their victory is only for a season, for the body also has the promise of immortality. We remember the resurrection of Christ, and as faith contemplates the past, hope looks forward to the future, and we stay ourselves on the word of our God.

That blessed word is neither ambiguous nor uncertain; it announces the SECOND APPEARING of the Lord Jesus, and the purpose for which He shall appear; and is the completed revelation of the fatherly name of God. The woman's Seed shall come the second time and destroy the prince of death. Those who dwell in the dust shall then awake

and sing,* for the body which was on earth the temple of the Holy Ghost, shall then be re-edified, "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." † The jewels shall be made up, ‡ and brought into the treasure-house, the children now scattered abroad, shall be gathered eternally into one,§ and God shall be glorified as a Father, for His family shall in soul and body be endowed with His own immortality. In the hope of this consummation we call God our Father now, and it is as certain to hope as the resurrection of Christ is to faith. "For if the Spirit of Him," says St. Paul, "that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies." ‖ How plain and unambiguous on this subject were the words of the Redeemer Himself at the most glorious moment of His history! He stood before the astonished Mary, blooming in immor-

* Is. xxvi. 19. † 2 Cor. v. 1. ‡ Malachi iii. 17.
§ John xi. 52. ‖ Rom. viii. 11.

tality and raised from death to die no more—"I ascend," He said, "to *my Father* and *your Father*, to *my God* and *your God*."* And He did ascend, the living Saviour to the God of the living—the Son raised from death to the Father who had raised Him. But that living Saviour was the first-fruits of a living Church, for His God is our God also; that Son raised from death was "the first-born among many brethren," † for His Father is our Father. His destinies and ours are linked; He Himself has linked them: His hopes and ours are one; He Himself has united them. The blessed and glorious work of redemption has thus altered even the character of death. Yea, it has abolished it; death exists no longer; it is but a sleep now. "Give place," said the Lord Jesus, when He entered the chamber where the ruler's daughter lay; "the maid is not dead but sleepeth." ‡ And again He said to His disciples, "our friend Lazarus

* John xx, 17. † Rom. viii. 29. ‡ Matt. ix. 24.

sleepeth." * And these words were Catholic—applicable to all His people, for "whoso liveth and believeth on me," He said to Martha, "shall never die." † He shall only sleep, and that in a Father's arms. Blessed sleep, to know a more blessed awaking! For He who for a season has turned man to destruction, shall yet rouse His sleeping family; His Fatherly voice shall yet be heard, Ye children, come again;‡ ye dwellers in the dust, awake! Oh glorious and longed-for day! May the God and Father of His people be pleased in His goodness to hasten it in His time!

Such then is the faith and stedfast hope of the Christian. He looks up to God as Calvary reveals Him, a Father full of love and plenteous in mercy; he looks into eternity with an expectation which that God alone can satisfy. I need not say that he is blessed in so doing. For the glorious object of Christian confidence, though represented in the

* John xi. 11. † Verse 26. ‡ Ps. xc. 3, P. B. V.

fathers of our flesh, is not like them; His commands are always right, His discipline is always wise, His ways are always those of righteousness and truth. "They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." * No disappointment moreover awaits the hope which reposes on his faithfulness; yea, it shall be infinitely exceeded. For "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."† Eternity alone can unfold them. And it shall unfold them; "the ages to come" shall reveal "the exceeding riches of God's grace, in His kindness toward" His saved family, "through Christ Jesus." ‡ Is it our desire that in these days of glory and felicity, we may be found within its hallowed circle? Let us be found now sitting at the feet of Jesus, and learning of Him to say, "Our Father, which art in Heaven."

* Heb. xii. 10. † 1 Cor. ii. 9. ‡ Eph. ii. 7.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE TO GOD, HIS HUMILITY, HIS LOVE TO MAN.

"When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven."

We have recognized these words as the expression of faith in God, and of that hope which maketh not ashamed. Let us now recognize them as the language of love, and the expression of unfeigned humility.

To enable us to do so, it is only needful to remember, as has been stated already, that nature is the exponent of revelation. A Father in Heaven reminds us of fathers upon earth. We know the feelings with which we intuitively regard them—we love them. Nature teaches this lesson so distinctly and

universally, that the name *Father* is in every language under heaven, the symbol of love, not on one side only, but on both. He who says '*My Father*' expresses devoted affection as well as unhesitating confidence; he in whose mouth these words have no such meaning, usurps the name of Son.

This filial affection leads also to community of interest. A son rejoices in a father's honour, and mourns at a father's disgrace; the honour and the disgrace are felt by him as his own. We cannot help doing so; it is a law of our moral being—a law so distinctly written on the heart, that it cannot be infringed without exciting horror. We hear some one traduced and vilified in common society, whilst no one protests, or cares to defend his reputation, and we observe his own son among these silent auditors. What, let me ask, is our judgment of such a son? Language furnishes no terms in which to express it adequately; our astonishment is equalled only by our indignation and abhorrence. But such foul exhibitions of

humanity are happily very rare; they are the exceptions which prove the rule. The name of a father is sacred in a son's presence, the most hardened traducer fears to make light of it. It may deserve to be made light of, it may be possible to prefer charges which cannot be refuted; but none, unless called by duty, would venture in such circumstances to prefer them. The simple appeal, *he is my father*, is a rebuke of which all stand in awe; it has power to reach the conscience, to silence and to abash. This holy principle leads besides to all conceivable duty; there is nothing which a father may not expect at the hand of a son. When the poet tells us, describing scenes of danger to which himself was witness—

> "Lo, on his back a son brings in his sire,—
> Vesuvius blazing like a world on fire;"

nature replies, he only did his duty—in risking his own life to save a father, he only fulfilled the responsibilities of a son. If I would comfort the heart of the infirm, the aged and the helpless man, nature teaches me to say—

I will be *a son* to you. I need say no more; that all-comprehensive name includes every thing which helplessness can ask, every thing which love can render. We have an exquisitely touching example of this in the words of Him who knew what was in man. It wanted but a little to the completion of the awful scene of Calvary, when Jesus looking round Him, ere His eyes were closed in death, "saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved." He said to the one, "Behold thy son;" to the other, "Behold thy mother." The tide of life was ebbing fast, and our blessed Master said no more. But He had said enough; those who heard Him, understood Him; St. John from that hour, took the Mother of his Lord to his own home.*

It scarcely needs to be pointed out that this fundamental law of nature has the solemn sanction of the Scriptures of God. This sanction is given moreover in the most unequivocal

* John xix. 25—27.

and striking manner. The only commandment with promise, is that which enjoins filial reverence and duty: it was rewarded of old with long life, as the especial mark of the approbation of the living God. And nothing can be conceived more awful than the penalties attached to the opposite. The father and mother of the stubborn and rebellious son were themselves to declare his guilt, and all Israel were to stone him.* If this command was neglected—if man overlooked the offence, God himself was to take it up. "The eye that mocketh at his father," is the threatening of Old Testament Scripture, "and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." † And the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ does not speak a different language. It promises to the obedient child, "it shall be well with thee;" ‡ it enumerates disobedience to parents among the sins which

* Deut. xxi. 18—21. † Prov. xxx. 17.
‡ Ephes. vi. 3.

shall bring down the vengeance of the eternal judgment-seat.*

These paramount obligations of filial duty are founded on the simple and obvious principle, "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." None has given as a parent has given; none therefore may require as is the right of a parent to require. He is the instrumental author of the child's being, and has imparted to him his own life; no relation can be conceived so solemn, so sacred, so tender. He watches moreover over the life which he has given, and nurses into maturity the being which he has imparted. Well may such love and care and kindness demand devoted affection and duty in return. The conscience therefore that is in every man recognizes the demand and meets it—"we have had fathers of our flesh . . . . and we gave them reverence." †

Such then is the import of the sacred paternal name. It is an acknowledgment on our part, of

* 2 Tim. iii. 2. † Heb. xii. 9.

the obligations of which we have just spoken, and an expression also of the love and devoted duty which they call for at our hands. And if we mean these things by it when we address the fathers of our flesh, our meaning is the same when we apply it to the blessed God. It is, as we have seen already, an acknowledgment of the unequalled love that spared not His own Son, the tender mercy that has obtained for us the remission of sins, the unspeakable grace that has bestowed on us His own life, and made us partakers of His own immortality. And if none has given as He has given, if none have received as we have been thus privileged to receive, it is also the breathing of filial affection and the cry of filial love to Him who has loved us. And if this love is not a sentiment when man is its object, but leads to community of interest and to all conceivable duty, still less is it a sentiment when its object is the blessed God. It will not permit us to stand by and see His name profaned, His honour compromised, His

laws trampled under foot. For His is a father's worthy name, His is a father's sacred honour; the mouth that is opened against Him is opened therefore against us His children, the hand that strikes at His holy authority, strikes also at our peace.* We may not be able to rebuke transgression, but we weep before God because of it.† We also testify against it by that righteousness which is its opposite, putting ourselves at God's disposal, and yielding all that we are and have to His command. The powers, faculties and affections which are His gracious gift, are laid by us as a living sacrifice on His altar; our children, our substance, our position in society are also consecrated to Him, if by any means they may be instrumental in the advancement of His glory. We ask continually, what we shall render to the Lord;‡ and His love burning in our hearts constrains us to reply continually, all that we have to ren-

* Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. † Ib. cxix. 136. ‡ Ib. cxvi. 12.

der. For love is unsatisfied whilst any thing remains ungiven. "God is love," and gave HIMSELF for us. And this paternal, self-sacrificing kindness awakens in our bosoms an affection like itself; we give OURSELVES to Him. It is our joy to live to Him as He lives for us; we are willing to die for Him, as for us also His life was laid down. This is no Utopian theory. Thousands of precious lives have in every age of the Church, been hazarded for the service and glory of God; and if Calvary testifies that the Father died for the children, the martyr's stake set up in every land, testifies for the children also that they have laid down their lives for their Father.

Prayer is not the expression of faith only, but is also the breathing of this love. And therefore prayer begins with the blessed words, Our Father. He who teaches us so to begin to pray, teaches us that this character of double sacredness belongs to all true supplication—that it is the language at once of filial confi-

dence and of filial affection toward the blessed God.

It is also the language of humility. For the Christian says, *Our* father, i. e. he calls God his father on a common ground—a ground on which others stand, and on which all may stand along with him. This consideration is one of paramount importance. If we really draw nigh with filial confidence to God, it must either be on a special or on a common ground. If the ground is special, what, let me ask, may it be? May it be personal worthiness and exalted attainment? We have already learned what makes this impossible; the knowledge of God's fatherly grace is the beginning of all attainment and the root of all obedience. May it be then the revelation of a love to us, which God does not bear to others? This also is impossible. There is no revelation but the written word, no communication to any man from on high but the testimony of Jesus which that word contains. The Holy Ghost is given indeed, but only as

a Spirit "of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" of whom the word testifies; * He is not given to supersede, neither is He given to add to it. He bears witness also that we are the children of God; but it is "*along with* our spirits." † *They bear this witness first*; for the joy which we find in filial communion, seconds the testimony of the holy gospel, and proves God to be our Father indeed. There is no special ground then on which any man may draw near to God. Let us not seek such a ground; it is the demand of pride, it is coveting a privilege which belongs to one only. Jesus said, *My* Father; but He occupied a ground entirely peculiar, He was the only-begotten Son. We may not do so, we must say, *Our* Father, using language in which all may join. And when our pride is humbled, so that we bless God for permitting us thus to come to him, we shall learn, each one for himself, to say "My Father" also. For His love to others, we shall find, abates not in

* Eph. i. 17. † Rom. viii. 16.

any wise, the intensity of His affection for us. He will be found, on the contrary, as watchful for our good, as careful of our minutest interests, as faithful and true to the promises of mercy on which He has caused us to hope, as if we composed His entire family.

The common ground of which I am now speaking, is that afforded by the holy Gospel. "God so loved the world," said the Lord Jesus, "that he gave His only-begotten Son."* Here is paternal love. It is manifested also to the world, and we are of the world. "God was in Christ," says St. Paul, "reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." † Here is paternal mercy. It is manifested also to the world, and we are of the world.‡ "This is the record," says St. John, "that God hath given

* John iii. 16. † 2 Cor. v. 19.

‡ This expression is not my own; I heard it many years ago from the lips of the very eminent Dr. Chalmers, and was so struck with its scriptural simplicity, that I have remembered it ever since. He was preaching from 1 John ii. 2. Having set forth the propitiation of Christ, he paused, and

to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Life is the privilege of access to God, the gift of the Holy Ghost and of immortality. These words declare it to be given—given to the world, for "he that believeth not" in it,—adds the Apostle,—"maketh God a liar; he believeth not the record that God gave."* Here then is a sure foundation of confidence and hope. We believe in this blessed love, we apprehend this tender mercy, we accept this gift of life with joy unspeakable, we draw nigh to the Giver, saying, Our Father;—we are received by Him as the children of His grace.† And this ground of confidence, as I need not observe, is not a special but a common ground. When the disciples knelt in prayer, Peter with John, James with Andrew, Matthew with Thomas, Philip with Bartholomew, they said,

regarding the congregation with that expression of benignity which those who once witnessed, never can forget, he said, "You will ask me, how are we to know that this propitiation is for us?" "The propitiation," he said, "is for the world, and you are of the world."

* 1 John v. 10, 11. † 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

as their Master had taught them, "*Our* Father which art in heaven;" it was the common language of many hearts in unison. And when we bend the knee to God and call upon Him as a Father, the case is the same with us, we are not alone in doing so. All who have believed the holy gospel, and tasted that the Lord is gracious, bend the knee in spirit with us, and with us call on that sacred name. And all are invited thus to call upon Him, all are made welcome thus to bend the knee. "Trust in Him at all times, ye people, pour ye out your hearts before Him;"* is the invitation of the inspired Psalmist; "Preach the gospel to every creature," † is the command of the Redeemer Himself. The true ground of confidence in God is therefore indeed common, for hardness of heart is the only barrier between any human being and the embrace of the everlasting arms.

This point has been dwelt on more especially, because it is the foundation of true Christian

* Ps. lxii. 8. † Mark xvi. 15.

humility. Men are greatly deceived in their ideas on this matter. How many are found to say, we are too humble to believe that God loves us, too humble to feel assured of His mercy! Such language only proves that they know not what humility is. There is no lack of humility in the most absolute assurance of Divine mercy; it may indeed be the assurance of pride, but it may also be the assurance of the most unfeigned humbleness of mind; the question depends entirely on the ground on which it rests. If we think that we may call God our Father, because we are more deserving than others, or because we have a special conviction that we are the favourites of heaven, then are we proud indeed. But if our boldness in entering the holiest, is simply through the blood of Jesus, * if we draw near rejoicing in that Saviour who is the gift of God to the world, and receiving into our hearts that life which is treasured up in Him for all who believe—so far from our assurance being in-

* Heb. x. 19.

compatible with humility, it is the very spirit of the humble-minded. Assurance like this will lead us to despise none; we shall put ourselves rather on a level with the lowest, saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the glory." If the vilest of the human race should say to the true Christian, "You call God your Father because you think yourself more deserving than I am," the words of Christ before us would furnish the Christian's response. 'I do not say *My* Father, would be his answer, I say *Our* Father; and oh be persuaded to say it along with me, that you may prove with all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, the blessedness of keeping His commandments and walking in His ways.'

Love to man is indicated by the same expressive word. *My* father, may be the language of an only child, but *Our* father reveals the member of a family. If it acknowledges a parent claiming filial affection on the one hand, it acknowledges brothers and sisters claiming brotherly love on the other. Who

then, let us inquire, are the Christian's brethren—who claim and are admitted also to this share in his affections—who are thus comprehended with himself, as he kneels before a Father's mercy-seat? If we would have this question answered aright, we must turn to the Scriptures of truth and consult their revelations of the Christian character. We shall stand astonished as we do so, at the catholic largeness of the truly Christian heart.

There is first, the brotherhood of the Spirit, comprehending those who hear the word of God and do it. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven," said our Lord Jesus, "the same is my brother." * Acknowledgment of the same Father's love, devotedness to His glory, and co-heirship of His eternal kingdom, are the bonds of this spiritual brotherhood. "For He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause," adds St. Paul, "He is not ashamed to call

* Matt. xii, 50.

them brethren." * And again he testifies that God has predestinated His people "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." † He is the first-born by resurrection, for He has risen from the dead as the first-fruits of His sleeping Church, and in their name and His own has taken possession of the eternal inheritance.‡ And when all things are ready, and the Son of man shall come in His glory, the same hand of acknowledgment that was stretched out to His people on earth,§ shall be stretched out to them from the heavenly throne; the same voice of kindness that hailed them then as "brother, sister, mother," shall say, "come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." ‖ Now it is with the Christian as with the Christian's Lord. He has been taught by the Spirit of holiness, to acknowledge the love, to confide in the mercy, to

* Heb. ii. 11. † Rom. viii. 29. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.
§ Matt. xii. 49. ‖ Ib. xxv. 34.

look for the glory of God. And between him and those to whom the same Spirit has taught the same blessed lesson, there is a bond of brotherhood of which the world knows nothing. It is the bond of common love to one glorious Object of love, common interest in His glory, common grief in His dishonour. There is moreover a common sense of duty and boundless obligation—duty which eternity itself shall not discharge—obligation which even its endless services shall never be able to exhaust. *Our Father* is therefore in his mouth and theirs, the language of a common love, a common filial, a common fraternal love. And this fraternal love is a principle of mighty power; it overleaps all restraints, it bursts every barrier which nature, society or prejudice interpose between man and man. Artificial distinctions are utterly disregarded by it. The noble seeks out the peasant, the rich bends the knee with the poor, and oftentimes by his bed of pain and sickness, to call on the same Father's name. National

distinctions are equally disregarded; it refuses to be confined by them. It has no sympathy with England's jealousy of France, or France's jealousy of England; it has nothing to say to the international differences of the Spaniard and Portuguese, of the Austrian and Italian. Wherever a Christian of any nation, meets one that loves the Lord Jesus, he rejoices to own a brother. The family of our Father above is gathered out of every kindred, tongue and people; * the Greenlander and Esquimaux, the New Zealander and the Negro, the Chinese and the Hindoo, may all be admitted within its hallowed circle. And as one paternal love embraces all its members, so one fraternal affection binds them in indissoluble unity. Armies may confront each other with weapons of death, and the stern law of national preservation may put in abeyance even the command of God. But however wild may be this tumult of the passions, it cannot put in abeyance the law of Christian love. You may put

* Rev. vii. 9.

weapons into the Christian soldier's hand, and lead him on to the deadly shock of battle. But if Christian heart meet Christian heart even in these awful circumstances, you cannot bid them cease to love; or if you do, they will not obey the mandate. And this heaven-born and glorious principle has a greater triumph still; it rises above party-distinctions and inveterate religious prejudices. Christ's seamless coat is now rent, His people are divided, His baptized body is disfigured by party-differences and party-names. And in every sect and division there are found those who say, Christian love and regard must be confined to us exclusively. But it is impossible to enforce the claim; when a Christian meets a brother, in vain you forbid him to love. There may be differences of the most grave and solemn kind, and these may lead to lines of conduct diametrically opposed to each other. But if he who loves the Lord Jesus, discovers amid them all, the same spirit of love in another, Christian affection will overleap every barrier, and constrain

him to stretch out the right hand of brotherly fellowship. And we need not wonder at this principle's expansive power; it is derived from its mighty strength. It was found in Jesus strong as death, and He is His people's pattern. "He laid down His life for us," says St. John, "and we ought *to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" * Nor has this pattern been exhibited in vain. "*I am ready to be offered,*" writes St. Paul; and again he says, "If I be offered *upon the sacrifice and service of your faith,* I joy and rejoice with you all." † Its pure and heaven-born character is the secret of its strength. It is so truly pure, so truly inspired of God, as to be the emphatic sign of our having "passed from death to life." ‡ Natural affection is no proof of this. But the principle of which we are speaking now, is not the growth of nature. It is love to others, because they love God and serve and glorify Him. It can-

* 1 John iii. 16. † 2 Tim. iv. 6. Phil. ii. 17.
‡ 1 John iii. 14.

not exist in our hearts, therefore, till we ourselves love God, and have learned to serve and glorify Him; till we have been awakened from the death of sin and raised to the life of righteousness. "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him;" * loving the Father, we love the children for His sake. This is the holy, mighty principle which breathes in the words before us, for every time that the Christian bends the knee, the sacred words, *Our Father*, give this principle expression.

There is, secondly, the brotherhood of the covenant, comprehending all who are baptized in God's name. Many of them may be prodigals and rebellious, but the tie which binds them to Him, binds them to us also. Let us turn again to nature; there are rebellious children in our families upon earth, as many a sorrowing parent knows, alas, too well. But a child's rebellion does not break the parental bond, does not destroy

* 1 John v. 1.

parental love, does not extinguish parental pity. We have a most touching illustration of this in David and his son Absalom. How grievous had been the offences of that ungodly son against his father! He had driven him from his throne, he had dishonoured his bed, he was even seeking his life. And yet the charge which David gave to the captains of the host on the day of battle, "Deal gently for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom," * bespake the father's unquenched and yearning love. And when the fatal tidings came, "the enemies of my lord the king . . . . be as that young man is," the monarch forgot his crown, and the man his inexpiable wrongs; only the father stood revealed—revealed in the lamentable cry, "Oh my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee!" † Now David's God had prodigals as well as David. "I have nourished and brought up children," is His lamentation, "and they have rebelled against me." ‡ And

* 2 Sam. xviii. 5. † Verse 32, 33. ‡ Is. i. 3.

His soul yearned over them even as David's over Absalom. "Is Ephraim my dear son," He asks, "is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, my bowels are troubled for him." * And again He communes with His paternal heart, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver thee, Israel?—mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." † This benign aspect of Godhead was especially exhibited in the ministry of our Blessed Redeemer. For it had respect above all, to these rebellious children, these "lost sheep of the house of Israel;" he was found continually among publicans, sinners and harlots. The Pharisees who thought themselves righteous, murmured against Him on this very account, and we are indebted to their murmuring for that most touching of His inestimable parables, the parable of the Prodigal Son. He whose history it relates was *a son* though re-

* Jer. xxxi. 20. † Hosea xi. 8.

bellious; the father's compassion yearned over him while he was devouring his living with harlots and lying among swine; and "while he was yet a great way off," that compassion greeted his return. But there is one circumstance that is peculiarly striking. The elder son reminds the father of his obedience, and of the disobedience of him whom he refuses to call *brother*, but calls reproachfully, '*thy son*.' The father's reply contains a most delicate, but most pointed reproof. He has just before expressed his joy, "This *my son* was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found;" and now he expresses it again, and almost in the same words. One word only is altered; he has said '*My son*,' he says now '*Thy brother*.' * Who does not see his reason for so doing? Thou hast reproached me for rejoicing, he would say; I did well to rejoice, and thou shouldest have rejoiced with me, for if the poor prodigal is *my son*, let me remind thee

* Luke xv. passim.

that he is *thy brother.* Now this is catholic truth. The Lord our God has still many prodigal children, many—many on whom His name is called, who yet are regardless of His love and wander from His ways, lost and dead in trespasses and sins. And His feelings towards them are expressed in this wondrous parable. We need not ask then what the feelings of the Christian are. Shall he deny the name of *brother* to him whom God yet owns as *a son?* Shall he shut up his bowels of compassion, when the bosom of God is yet open? Shall he refuse to include him in his prayers whom the Most High is still waiting to bless? No; the Christian is not like the elder son; when he says '*Our father,*' he comprehends the baptized family. He may be compelled, with St. Paul, to bewail many who have sinned and not repented, and to testify to others, that because they mind earthly things, their end is destruction; but it shall be the bewailing of brotherly

love and the testimony of fraternal pity, delivered, as was his also, with many tears.

There is, thirdly, the brotherhood of flesh, comprehending all mankind. For as Christianity is true LIBERTY, it is also true EQUALITY and true FRATERNITY. The Christian knows that "there is no difference; that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." * He knows that there is no difference, that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men has appeared" † in the incarnate Redeemer. He knows that Redeemer's proclamation, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" ‡ —that there breathes not a man "from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand," to whom he may not proclaim God as a Father. And knowing these things, he regards and loves every man as a brother.§ The

* Rom. iii. 23. † Titus ii. 11. original. ‡ Is. xlv. 22.

§ I may be permitted in confirmation of this sentiment, to quote the recent and striking language of the Bishop of Oxford. "We must learn to treat every man as a brother, because Christ has redeemed him. In the common posses-

cross tells him what the measure of this love should be, and fain would he attain to it—fain would he be willing to give his life for all men. "We were willing to have imparted to you," says St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "not the gospel of God only, but also *our own lives;*" "the Lord make you," he adds, "to abound in love toward *all men, even as we do towards you.*" * This is the Christian's standard. And when therefore he bends the knee and says '*Our Father,*' the prayer comprehends the entire human family. His Lord has commanded him to pray for all men; † His Lord has instructed him thus to express the petition.

Blessed, holy words—worthy of Him who washed the disciples' feet, who gathered the publicans and sinners round Him, who on

sion of a fallen humanity, in the common heritage of suffering and want, in the common mystery of the grave and corruption, in the common blessings of redemption, we have the true brotherhood; and thence will flow an exuberance of kindness, sometimes in reproof, sometimes in relief, and always in sympathy."

* 1 Thess. ii. 8. original; iii. 12 † 1 Tim. ii. 1.

the hill of Calvary, "gave Himself a ransom for all!" May we learn that love to the people of God, that compassion for the lost wanderer, that merciful remembrance of all men, which He designed them to express!

Such then is the spirit of the Christian; he looks up to God with the affection of a child; he walks among men as a brother; he puts himself on a level with the lowest; he seeks in sincerity the welfare and salvation of all. Thrice-blessed is the man in whom such a spirit is found. It glorifies Him who is in Heaven, and blesses all around us here below; it illustrates our course on earth by deeds of piety, charity and mercy; it makes our path "like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Be it our most earnest desire to have such a spirit found in us, and under its holy influence

> "To fill our odorous lamp with deeds of light
> And hope that reaps not shame!"

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN'S FORGETFULNESS OF SELF, HIS DEVOTEDNESS TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE BEST INTERESTS OF MAN, HIS HOLINESS AND HIS RESIGNATION.

"When ye pray, say, Our Father... Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in Heaven, so in earth."

"Now abide," says St. Paul, "these three, FAITH, HOPE, LOVE." * They are the fundamental principles of the Christian character, and the essentials of living Christianity. To approach God as a Father, is, as we have seen already, to give expression to all the three. Such an approach then eminently marks the Christian. "For as many as are

* 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Original.

led by the Spirit of God," says the same Apostle, "they are the sons of God." And what spirit is it which thus at once leads and marks His children? "Not the spirit of bondage again to fear," the sacred text continues, "but . . . the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba! Father."* And if in the opening of this model of prayer we have found what is essential to the Christian, we shall find the developements of his character in the varied petitions which follow. For they reveal a temper of mind which is the natural result of love, and discover a state of heart which is the necessary fruit of faith and hope in God.

In the petitions which we are now to consider, we discern in the first place, the Christian's entire forgetfulness of self, together with his devotedness to God and to those objects which are dear to God. The heart that is in man by nature, has no conception either of the true character of the religion of Jesus, or of that prayer which is its language

* Rom. viii. 14, 15.

and expression. The professed worldling never prays at all. He may use a form of words, but immersed in pleasure or in business, occupied with schemes of avarice or ambition, he has neither time nor inclination to call upon God; "God is not in all his thoughts." If we ask him why he neglects so sacred a duty, he asks in return what profit he should derive from its observance. For his whole conception of prayer and of religion itself, is connected with selfish advantage. If we could tell him that by making God his counsellor, he would ensure success to his worldly schemes, he would at least comprehend our meaning, and might be induced to bow the knee. But because we can give him no such assurance, we cannot induce him to pray. And there are many who condemn him and esteem themselves established and advanced Christians, who are yet as far as he is, from apprehending either the nature of true religion or the exalted character of real prayer. They pray because they have sins to

be forgiven, because they have souls to be saved, because they have a hell to escape, because they have a heaven to win; their prayers are deprecations of wrath and supplications for mercy. But if this is all we know of prayer, we are as intensely selfish as he who seeks for mere worldly good; such deprecations and petitions concern self alone, and terminate on self. And so they ought to terminate, will be the answer of many, when that which we seek is the salvation of the soul; there is not, there cannot be a nobler object of anxiety or desire. There is, blessed be God, a far nobler object of anxiety; true religion does not terminate in self, nay the first lesson in true prayer, is to forget self *as self* altogether. Do men ask, whom then shall we remember? —do they inquire in astonishment, for what then shall we pray? Remember your Father in Heaven,—is the answer of God's holy word; let your prayers ascend for the advancement of His glory.

This is no Utopian theory; I appeal in

demonstration of its truth, to the Divine model of prayer before us. Let us observe the point at which we have arrived. The petitioners have been admitted into the presence of the King of Heaven who loves them, they are assured, with a father's love, and yearns over them with a father's mercy. They are encouraged to declare their wants, to speak their wishes, to declare and speak them to that gracious One who spared not His own Son, and will with Him also freely give them all things. Blessed circumstances—blessed opportunity! If we found ourselves in the presence of an earthly king, and had such an opportunity presented to us, we should not be slow to take advantage of it. What advantage then do these petitioners take of their heavenly and paternal audience? Let us listen with solemn interest; Christ Himself is instructing them, and us through them, to pray. The first petition will declare the first wish of the heart—what is felt as most precious, what is regarded as most desirable. To

what then has this petition reference? Does it ask for some earthly good, for pleasure, pomp or power on the one hand, for personal, domestic or social happiness on the other? It respects nothing of the kind. Has it reference then to the salvation of the soul—does it ask for the remission of sin, for deliverance from hell, for a title to the joys of Heaven? Neither is that its object. The hands are clasped, the knees are bent, the mouth is opened, the cry ascends, but the petitioners ask nothing for themselves. It is a filial cry, "Our Father, *hallowed be thy name.*" Your prayer is heard, answers Jehovah from the mercy-seat, "I have both glorified it and I will glorify it again;" speak your further wishes. Again the children cry, but the character of their prayer is unaltered, "*thy kingdom come.*" Ask once more, says their royal Father, as He bends from His throne to listen. They ask once more, but their own interests are still postponed; "*thy will be done,*" they say, "as in heaven, so in earth," THIS then

is true prayer; its first lesson is to forget ourselves, that we may think of God and His glory.

Prayer therefore, as was stated already, is the breathing of love. To postpone our own concerns, to forget our own interests, that we may devote ourselves to the concerns and interests of another, to declare ourselves happy and contented and satisfied, provided only these interests are promoted, is the very triumph of love. How touching, how beautiful is the expression of this love in the mouth of the royal Psalmist! "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he exclaims, "and let the whole earth be filled with His glory! —the prayers of David the son of Jesse, are ended."* Let these things be, he means to say, and David the son of Jesse has all his wishes satisfied. It it even so with the words before us. David's prayers *were ended* if the glory of God was promoted, for that glory

* Psalm lxxii. 18—20.

was his all. And the prayer of the Christian *begins* with a reference to the same glory. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the objects most precious to the truly Christian heart are the name, the kingdom, and the holy will of God.

These petitions, like all prayer, are also the expression of faith. We have seen that the petitioners make no mention of themselves. That they should not mention their bodily wants requires little explanation, but even the glory of God is nothing to us if we come short of eternal life. We should not therefore have expected the salvation of the soul to be postponed, we should have expected rather the very first petition to have been, "Save us, Lord, we perish." And so doubtless it would, but for one reason—faith dictates the petitions. I go into my friend's house, and find him overwhelmed with sorrow. He is in the power of a merciless creditor, he expects every instant to be dragged to prison, and to see his wife and children turned homeless and pro-

visionless on the world. I give him my bond for what he owes, and retire amid his expressions of grateful obligation. A few hours pass over and the fatal moment is at hand that should have consigned him to hopeless ruin. But to the astonishment of all, his step is light, his countenance is radiant with smiles, and he is busied in some concerns of mine. You have forgotten, it is said to him, your awful circumstances, and are become indifferent to the welfare of your family; you have nothing now to do with other men's matters, but ought rather to consider your own pressing extremities. To all this, however, he has an answer ready. I have not forgotten, he replies, the circumstances to which you refer, neither am I indifferent to the welfare of my wife and children. But my anxieties are ended, a friend's kindness has relieved me from my extremities, and well may I now devote myself to the interests of him who has so mercifully interposed for me. It is even so with the true Christian. If he makes no

mention, when he comes into God's presence, of sins which need forgiveness, of a soul which needs salvation, of a hell which must be escaped and of a heaven which must be gained, it is not that he has forgotten these things, or esteems them unimportant. *It is because his anxieties are quieted about them.* He has repaired to Calvary, and there in the slain Lamb of God he has discerned a Father's love; in the blood poured forth there for the remission of sins he has apprehended with joy unspeakable a Father's forgiving mercy; in the empty grave of Jesus and His ascension into heaven, he has found what assures him of deliverance from wrath, on the one hand, and everlasting life on the other. Relieved therefore by faith—that faith which says "our Father," from anxiety about his own salvation, he has no care left, save the glory and service of God. It is his willing care, his most reasonable service; 'Well may I,' is his language, 'thus devote myself to Him who came into the world and died and rose again to provide

eternally for me.' It is THE VERY GLORY of Christianity that it enables us thus to live; delivering us by its abundant revelations of grace from all anxiety about ourselves, that we may be devoted to God alone. The religion therefore which it inculcates is one of faith and love; the prayer which it dictates is the expression of faith on the one hand and the outpouring of love on the other.

It is the outpouring of love not to God only but to man. For man's welfare and salvation, as well as God's glory, take precedence of his own interests in the heart of the true Christian. It is only needful in proof of this, to refer to the petitions before us. Every one of them respects man's blessedness as truly and directly as it respects God's glory; there is not one of them which can be answered, save in and through man, or without making man blessed in time and in eternity. Let us take the first of them, "Hallowed be thy name." The name here referred to is that which has just been confessed—the

sacred name, "Our Father." Honour is put on that name when it is known and trusted and loved, and when God being confided in as a Father, is gladly and cheerfully obeyed. It is the children of men moreover who put this honour on the name of God; to none else is He revealed as a Father. This petition therefore respects them ; nay, is a direct prayer on their behalf, that they may know and glorify the God and Father of Jesus as their Father and their God in Him. It embraces the members of our families, our friends, our kindred; it comprehends our country, Christendom, the world. It respects men besides in their several varieties of moral and spiritual character, and according to their several conditions. If they already know God and have been taught to glorify Him, it asks on their behalf that they may do so more and more. If His name is called upon them while yet they know Him not, it asks that they may be brought to know Him. If they are yet sitting in the darkness of heathenism, it prays the Lord of the har-

vest that the testimony of His love may go to the very ends of the earth and reach the extremities of the world. It is therefore the prayer of love to man, and well befits the lips of those who have just said "Our Father," —who have just acknowledged by these expressive words, their brotherhood with all true Christians, with the baptized family and with the human race. And the second petition, "Thy kingdom come," is in all respects the same. "The kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." * And this kingdom comes when it is set up in human hearts—when men find "peace with God" †—when believing in the Saviour they also "rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory" ‡—when His love constrains them to live not unto themselves, and fills them "with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." § This petition therefore,

* Rom. xiv. 17.
† Ib. v. 1.
‡ 1 Peter i. 8.
§ Phil. i. 11.

like the former, respects man; it is a prayer for the blessedness and salvation of man. It is also equally comprehensive, embracing all, excluding none. It asks, for God's believing people, that they may be more entirely surrendered to the service of their glorious King. It asks for the baptized Church that the blessed fruits of peace and joy and righteousness, may spring up more abundantly within her borders. It asks for a world lying in wickedness and dead in sin, that it may be reclaimed from the dominion of Satan and brought to submit itself to the gentle sceptre of Christ. If these things cannot be without bringing glory to God, neither can they be without bringing blessedness to man. And the petition therefore which implores them expresses love to man, a brother's love, the love which says "Our Father." Nor does the third petition differ from those which precede it. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth," is a prayer for the children of men, imploring grace on their behalf that they may

do the will of God. There is no limitation of the grace which is implored; we ask that the will may be done on earth *as it is in heaven*, i. e. universally, perfectly and constantly. There can be no limitation of persons then; this petition like the two former, must embrace all without excluding any. For Satan has no right to the services of any; the earth and its inhabitants are the Lord's alone. It is surely not needful to prove that this is a petition for human blessedness. The essence of Heaven's own happiness, is that its inhabitants do the will of God. The essence of Hell's misery, is that those who abide there are in everlasting rebellion against Him. We see the misery which fills the earth around us; that misery has been introduced by sin alone, by men having forsaken the blessed will of God. Let but this one petition be answered, and the whole misery of the world would cease; earth would become the very gate of Heaven, its pure enjoyments would be the antepast of immortality. It is worthy there-

fore of those who by the sacred words "our Father," have acknowledged the interest of brethren in all that concerns man.

These then are the aspirations of the Christian. He enters the presence of God with the confidence of a child, but it is not in the first place to plead his own cause, save only as that cause is identified with higher interests. These higher interests take precedence; he has a father's glory to provide for, and the salvation of brethren is the object of his heart's desire. Forgetfulness of self is thus the first and most prominent feature of true and acceptable prayer.*

It is not however its only feature; we dis-

* If the foregoing statements be scriptural, they expose in the most striking manner the delusion that mere seriousness is Christianity. So rooted is this delusion in men's minds, that we constantly hear the phrase, *He is a decidedly serious man*, i. e. he is a true Christian. But seriousness is simply anxiety about salvation. And let us not deceive ourselves—such anxiety is no certain sign of grace. It exists in the bosom of thousands along with the most determined self-righteousness, which is the very opposite of true and living godliness. LOVE is the mark of God's family, and love alone.

cern in these petitions, in the second place, the Christian's Holiness. We have seen that the petitioners make no mention of themselves; we shall see now that their real welfare is so identified with the higher interests for which they have been praying, that they are personally comprehended in every supplication which they present. This arises from the connection which God has established between His glory and our blessedness—a connection so indissoluble that we cannot seek the advancement of the one without of necessity including the other. Let us look again at the petitions. The burden of the first is that the sons of men may hallow the name of God. This includes the petitioners, for they are sons of men. The burden of the second is, that God's kingdom of peace and love and righteousness may be set up in human hearts. And this also includes the petitioners, for they have human hearts. The burden of the third is that the inhabitants of earth may do the will of God below, as the inhabitants of Hea-

ven do the same will above. And this too includes the petitioners, for they are citizens of this lower world, and of the number of earth's inhabitants. This inclusion is not only necessary but intended; the petitioners design to include themselves. The love which has taught them to say "Our Father," forbids it to be otherwise. They pray that others may hallow the name of God. Shall they not seek grace then that *they themselves* may hallow it? They pray that His kingdom may be set up in the hearts of others. Shall they not earnestly seek then that it may be established in *their own?* They ask that others may do His blessed will. Shall they not desire then, shall they not pray, that *they themselves* may do it? It is needless to say that necessity is laid upon them; they cannot thus pray for others without consciously including themselves. The personal reference and burden of these petitions is in truth as distinct as their catholic reference and burden. "Our Father," say the devoted children, "teach

us to hallow thy name, let thy kingdom of peace and love be set up in *our* hearts, may *we* do thy blessed will, and find thy service perfect freedom." But while these petitions are personal, they are not selfish. There is no seeking of mere personal safety, there is no isolation of merely personal interest; what they ask blesses themselves indeed, but while it does so, it glorifies God and sets forward the salvation of all men.

It is when we discern the personal burden of these petitions, that we see them stamped so legibly with the impress of Christian holiness. Holiness is purity of heart. And those surely must be pure in heart whose first desires on earth are that they may hallow the name of God, that they may live as the subjects of His kingdom, that they may walk as the children of His love. And if this purity of heart is manifested in the life also, what manner of man will the true Christian be! Reverence for the name, the will, and the laws of God will mark his whole

behaviour. He will hallow that name in a human parent, by the cheerful obedience of a child; he will hallow it, if himself a father, by dealing with his children as he also is dealt with by Him who is above. He will hallow it as a member of the Church, by submission to those who are over him in the Lord; he will hallow it as a citizen by a quiet and peaceable demeanour, honouring the king because he fears God. He will hallow it also by ruling for God, if civil or spiritual authority is committed to him, as well as by being subject for His sake. He will live as a citizen of heaven and a subject of its glorious King, as one who is at peace with God, and desires to be at peace with all men. He will set to others an example of doing the will of God, and the whole weight of his moral influence will be cast into the same scale,—will be devoted to the accomplishment of the objects for which he prays. Such is the disciple of Christ, as we discern the lineaments of his character in the petitions which are now before

us. Blessed indeed is it thus to pray, more blessed thus to live! "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," was the exclamation of the conscience-struck Agrippa. And well might St. Paul answer as he did; his words apply to us this day as truly as to those to whom they were then spoken. God grant that we may be found "both almost and altogether" what that holy Apostle was! *

There is yet a third feature of the Christian character apparent in the petitions before us; that feature is Resignation. It appears more prominently than perhaps any other. The words "Our Father, hallowed be thy name, thy will be done," remind us at once of the brightest pattern of resignation, even of that blessed One who taught us thus to pray. It was six days before the feast of the passover, and He knew that His hour was at hand. "Now is my soul troubled," He said, "and what shall I say?—Father, save me from this hour? . . . *Father, glorify thy name.*" † That

* Acts xxvi. 28, 29. † John xii. 27, 28.

dreadful hour approached yet nearer; it was the night before His passion. "*Father,* if thou be willing," He said, "remove this cup from me, nevertheless *not my will but thine be done.*" * Let us mark these words of our Redeemer. They not only express resignation, but coincide with the words before us in teaching us how it is attained. Jesus recognized what befel Him as the appointment of a Father's will, and dealt out to Him by a Father's hand; He therefore cheerfully submitted to that will and glorified God's name by such submission.

Poor human nature left to itself, knows nothing of this attainment. It is easy to assent to the will of God in prosperity. But adversity comes, and dispensations grievous to flesh and blood crowd the one upon the other. Our substance is taken, our earthly comfort is diminished and impaired, we are surrounded with difficulties, perplexities and troubles. Sickness knocks at our door,

* Luke xxii. 42.

disease enters our dwelling, death robs us of a brother, a sister, a parent or a child, our harp is turned "to mourning, and our organ into the voice of them that weep." We are sadly prone in such circumstances to murmur against God; His ways toward us appear harsh, cruel, and unkind. And if such troubles continue long, and calamity presses heavier and heavier, our evil nature whispers as did the wife of Job to her afflicted husband, "Curse God and die." But faith, as we have already seen, comes to our relief, and saves us at once from blasphemy and despair. We remember that a Father who knows our frailty, knows also and has appointed every thing that befals us; and this blessed remembrance calms the tumult of the mind. Love also comes to our relief; the cup is bitter, but we love Him who administers it, and love takes the bitterness away. And hope comes in besides. "We know," says St. Paul, "that all things work together for good to them that

love God." * And tribulations are certainly included. For "tribulation" he says again, "worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." † These precious assurances become an anchor of the soul. We remember that God's will occasions no pain in heaven; it cannot then, we say, occasion needless pain on earth, for it is the will of the same God. And if the pain is needful, why should we repine? We repine no longer, we rather welcome present trouble as our preparation for eternal, holy rest. And when we are visited with the most overwhelming of those troubles to which reference has just been made, hope has then especially its inappreciable consolations in store. For it assures us of the restoration hereafter, of those who are gone from us here. How faithful to nature are the mournful words—

"When true hearts are withered
And fond ones are flown,

* Rom. viii. 28. † Ib. v. 3—5.

Oh, who would inhabit
This bleak world alone!"

But hope reminds us that these fond ones shall return, and that though "weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning:"* hope enables us to lift our heads from the dust, and instead of useless mourning, teaches us rather to pray

"Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead thou me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone.
And with the morn those angels' faces smile
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile."

He who has abolished death, "the God of hope," wipes thus away even now the tears of His sorrowing people, and enables the bereaved friend, kinsman, brother, and that chief mourner of the human family, the bereaved parent, to rejoice. Blessed be His name for the consolation! Without it, what should we be!—with it, all is easy. Resignation ceases to be an effort; we say, as in the words be-

* Psalm xxx. 5.

fore us, Our Father, may thy name be hallowed, may thy blessed will be done.

The inspiration of hope, I observe in conclusion, appears in all these petitions as prominently as that of faith and love. Let us observe their amazing largeness. We ask that God's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven; that His name may be hallowed on earth (for the petitions are manifestly coextensive) as it is hallowed in heaven; that His kingdom may come on earth as it has come in heaven. Now as we cannot seek the glory of Christ till faith assures us that our personal interests are safe, and cannot long for the coming of His kingdom except we love the coming King, we cannot pray with intelligence for what we know shall never be granted, or devote ourselves for objects which we know shall never be realized. These prayers then shall be granted, these objects shall be realized. And the Christian in thus pouring forth his heart before God, is manifestly anticipating the time—looking forward in hope to the day

when the will of God shall be done on earth universally, perfectly and constantly, when His name shall be hallowed by all, and His kingdom command the fealty of all. Holy Scripture warrants him in such an expectation. It reveals the mighty purpose of God to set up His kingdom over the whole earth, to cause His name to be universally hallowed, and His will to be universally done. "I saw in the night-visions," says the prophet, "and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven . . . . and there was given Him dominion, glory and a kingdom, that *all* people, nations and languages should serve Him." * The kingdom then shall be universal, and the obedience also universal. The name of the one living and true God shall moreover be known universally. "As truly as I live," was His adjuration to Moses, "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." † And again He declares by Isaiah, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of

* Dan. vii. 13, 14. † Numb. xiv. 21.

the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." * And those who know His name shall honour it from the one end of the earth to the other. Three times in one inspired sentence is this declared by the prophet Malachi in language so plain and decisive, that to evade its meaning is impossible. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same," Jehovah assures us by his mouth, "my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering, for my name shall be great among the heathen." † "Behold I make all things new," is the proclamation of the Son of God as He assumes the royal seat.‡ They shall be new indeed when from His throne of light He shall behold a world now so evil and rebellious, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." § It is on this mighty purpose of God, revealed in the holy

* Isaiah xi. 9.
† Mal. i. 11.
‡ Rev. xxi. 5.
§ Isaiah xix. 25.

gospel, that Christian hope is anchored. The world is now indeed in the hands of Satan, the sons of men are doing his unhallowed will, and dishonouring the name of God; but the Christian rejoices to anticipate this better and brighter day. Hope reminds him that Christ shall yet be King, that God shall yet be glorified, that man shall yet be blessed; hope constrains him, as in the petitions before us, to plead with God that this blessed time may come. It constrains him also to forget his own interests, that he may devote his life and energies to the advancement of these sacred objects; as he looks for, so he hastens the coming of the day of God.*

We have thus seen the essential principles of living Christianity at once in their genuine operation and in their mighty power. While faith apprehends the blessed God as a Father, love identifies His interest with ours, and longs to see Him glorified, and hope anticipating the joyful time, presses after it in eager de-

* 2 Pet. iii. 12. Original.

votedness. It only remains that we implore Almighty God of His mercy that they may be found within our hearts, and that we may learn that forgetfulness of self, that devotedness to the glory of God and the best interests of man, that holiness and resignation, which the petitions before us express. So shall we stand in our lot and be counted worthy to inherit God's kingdom when the intercessions of His Church are answered and that kingdom comes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CARE FOR HIS TEMPORAL INTERESTS, BUT DEADNESS TO THE WORLD.

"When ye pray, say, Our Father . . . give us day by day our daily bread."

We have seen the Christian as a citizen of heaven, a child of God. We have marked the elevation of His character, the holy and filial aspirations of His devoted and loving heart. We must now know him as a citizen of this world, having earthly wants to provide for, and a part to act amid sublunary things. We must know Him also as a sinful creature, standing in need of mercy every hour. And we must know Him as a frail and feeble crea-

ture, exposed to continual perils and the temptations of the wicked One. But we shall recognize still the same purity of heart. While "providing things honest in the sight of all men," he is dead to the world's interests. Though standing in daily need of mercy himself, he yet shews forth that mercy in his behaviour to all. And though frail, feeble, and in danger of falling every hour, he is conscious of his weakness and humbled before God because of it. It is not therefore in the spirit of self-confidence that he meets the perils which surround him; he lifts his eyes to heaven continually and stays himself on the support of his Almighty Father's arm.

These features of character will require detailed consideration. We shall occupy ourselves at present with the first of them, endeavouring to contemplate the Christian as acting his part here, while his heart is with God, and his portion is hereafter.

Let us not be met by the objection that the Christian has no part to act here. Let us

not be told that the cares of a family and needful earthly provision are matters for the worldling only, but are beneath the notice of those who are heirs of eternal glory. Let us not be reminded in proof of this, that Christ's people are dead to the world, and that their only care is to serve and glorify the Lord. This is fanaticism, not religion. It is indeed true that the Christian's only care is to serve and glorify the Lord; but it is also true that the Lord is served and glorified by our diligent attention to the duties of our several callings, and by our striving to fill with credit and honour those places in society which His Providence has seen meet to appoint to us. It is indeed true that the Christian is dead to the world; but deadness to the world is not indifference to it. The world has a place, though a subordinate one; and deadness to the world is, first giving it that subordinate place, and second, being contented with such a measure of its goods as we possess.

I. That the world claims a place in the regards of the Christian, is manifest from the petition before us. Christ teaches us to pray for the supply of our needful earthly wants; but if these wants are unworthy of the Christian's regard and remembrance, the Saviour assuredly would not have been found doing so. For prayer brings the matter prayed for under the notice of the Most High. But if we are indifferent to the world, and consider temporal provision utterly beneath *our* notice, we do wrong to call *God's* attention to it. And if on the other hand we do right to pray for it because it is worthy of *God's* notice and attention, it is surely worthy of *ours*. Prayer moreover implies exertion to attain the object prayed for; without such corresponding exertion, we only mock the Lord. We are commanded therefore by our Saviour and His Apostles, to labour as well as pray for temporal provision, to work with our own hands that we may "owe no man anything," to "provide things honest in the sight of all

men." And the world must have this place in our remembrance, if we would glorify God's holy name.

But it is equally manifest that the place which the world has thus a right to claim, is one strictly and entirely subordinate. Christ does indeed teach us to pray for daily bread; but the petition comes *after* "Hallowed be thy name," *after* "Thy kingdom come," *after* "Thy will be done." The glory of God, in other words, and the interests of His kingdom, are first regarded and sought after, whilst our earthly wants and necessities take a secondary and inferior place. This is just the difference between the worldling and the follower of Christ. The former makes the world his chief, nay his only object; he loves himself and lives for himself alone. Who should care for my interests, he asks, more than I; who will look to them, if I neglect them? He trusts also in his own wisdom and diligence to secure those advantages which seem to him so precious, and so is often filled with corroding

anxiety and consumed with care and trouble. With the Christian however it is wholly otherwise, as the petition before us declares. The place which it occupies is, as we have already seen, at once declarative of love—that devoted love to God which makes us forget ourselves. And the petition itself taken along with its place in the prayer, is equally declarative of faith. Be it mine, is its language, to seek the hallowing of His name, the coming of His kingdom and the doing of His will: He to whose glory I thus devote myself, will provide for my interests, will supply my temporal necessities. I will not trust in my own wisdom and diligence, but make known these necessities to Him: He feeds the fowls of the air, and I am much better than they; He clothes the lilies of the field, and will much more clothe His children. Corroding anxiety and care find no place therefore in the Christian's bosom. Prayer is the expression of confidence. "Be careful for nothing," says St. Paul, "but in every thing by prayer

and supplication let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds."* It is so in the experience of Christ's people. Having said, as in the words before us, "Our Father, give us our bread," they believe that they shall receive it, and therefore dismiss all care.

II. The second characteristic feature of true deadness to the world, is indissolubly connected with the first. He in whose estimation the things of time are subordinate to the glory and service of God, is contented with such a portion of them as it may seem meet to God to bestow. If that portion is small, he does not desire it to be greater. He remembers the counsel of inspiration, "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content:" he gives heed to the solemn warning, "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare . . . for the love of money is the root of all evil."† If that portion is large, he does not

* Phil. iv. 6, 7. † 1 Tim. vi. 8—10.

give his heart to it. He remembers the counsel of the Apostle to the "rich in this world," not to be "high-minded nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God;" he desires rather to be "rich in good works," than to add to his silver and gold.* Whether therefore he is poor or rich, he prays, as in the words before us, Give me my daily bread. If he is poor, he asks only what is needful; if he is rich, he asks no more. For God has guaranteed no more; riches may at any time take wings and fly away. With the worldling it is just the opposite. The world is his first object and he is therefore never satisfied. Being an idolater, he is covetous,† and his covetousness is insatiable. One of our Lord's many discourses, if compared with the words before us, presents this difference between the worldling and the Christian in very strong relief. "The ground of a certain rich man"—He tells us, "brought forth plentifully." He rejoiced greatly in the abundance of his corn

* 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. † Ephes. v. 5.

and wine. "Soul," he said, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." Now let us take this language as a revelation of the worldling, and contrast him with the Christian as he is revealed in the prayer before us. The one speaks of much goods, the other asks for bread; the one speaks of many years, the other looks no farther than the day; the one trusts in uncertain riches, rejoicing that his much goods are laid up, the other reposes on a Father's faithfulness; the one congratulates himself on the possession of luxuries, bidding his soul take its ease, the other is content with what is necessary. Let us further observe our Lord's comment on the character which he has just pourtrayed. He pronounces him a fool, and adds the awful sentence, "He layeth up treasure for himself, but is not rich toward God." * How instructive are these words! He is not rich toward God; —not rich in faith, in love, in works of

* Luke xii. 16—21.

righteousness; he loves himself, thinks of himself, lives only for himself, and therefore lays up treasure. And how blessed is the contrast which the character of the Christian presents, as drawn in this model of prayer by the same unerring hand! He is rich toward God—rich in faith, in love, in hope, for he has learned to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." He is rich in devotedness, for he seeks first the glory of God; he is rich in good works, for he is zealous for all that is in conformity with the will,—that hallows the name,—that advances the kingdom of God. And he does not therefore lay up treasure for himself, for there is no laying up of treasure in the prayer, as day follows day, Give us the bread that may last for the day.

It is, I repeat, because the Christian is rich toward God, that he does not lay up treasure. For the secret of his contentment if poor, and of his abstraction from the world if wealthy, is the faith, the love, the hope of which I have just spoken. Confiding in God as a

Father, and looking for that glorious inheritance which is laid up for His children, the Christian, if poor in this world, is not cast down by his poverty. He knows that this world is not his abiding city, and that the privations of earth shall soon be forgotten amid the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. Privations moreover do not affect him as they affect other men, for the world is not his object, his heart and affections are elsewhere. The abundance of his joy and his deep poverty abound therefore oftentimes to the riches of his liberality; two mites may be his all, but love presents them as a willing offering to the God of his salvation. And as it is with the Christian in poverty, so it is with him in abundance. Wealth and prosperity come to him from a Father's hand, and lay on him a fresh obligation to fealty, love and obedience. They do not seduce his affections, for these are preoccupied with God; and he rather asks with the anxious earnestness of love, how he may use them to the glory of

God's name. I will seek out Christ's little ones, he says, and if they are hungry I will feed them, if they are thirsty I will give them drink, if they are naked I will clothe them, if they are sick I will minister to them. This surely is the blessed privilege of wealth; it enables me to shew whose I am and whom I seek to serve. Let me thus then make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that

> "When these failing lips grow dumb
> And thought and memory flee;"

when I go forth of this world, carrying nothing out, as I brought nothing in, they may receive me into everlasting habitations.* Let me thus remember Jesus now, that when the glad morning of the resurrection shall dawn, and He shall come in the glory of His kingdom, He also may remember me. Such is the spirit of him who is indeed dead to the world; such is the Christian, whether rich or poor. To reverse the awful judgment pronounced by Jesus on the worldling, he layeth

* 1 Tim. vi. 7. Luke xvi.

not up treasure for himself, but is rich toward God.

The language of this petition, "Give us *day by day* our daily bread," has an obvious allusion to the experience of Israel in the desert, when for forty years their daily bread fell *day by day* upon their tents, round about their habitation. God's dealings with the natural Israel then, furnish also a remarkable analogy to His dealings with His people now, and a striking exemplification of all that has just been set forth. Let us observe the words of Moses in which these dealings are summed up. "Thou shalt remember," He said, "all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no. He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the

mouth of the Lord doth man live." "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart," added the lawgiver, "that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." * We have only to compare these words with this Divine model of prayer, to discern the analogy of which I have spoken. They acknowledge the paternal relation which subsisted between God and Israel. This relation, it is needless to say, still subsists between God and His people; we also acknowledge it in saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." They speak of a father's chastening; there is a father's chastening still—chastening which demands the submission of faith and hope and love. They speak of the purpose of that chastening, to humble and to prove, to know whether His children would keep His commandments or not. And the purpose of our Father's chastening is still the same; it is to teach us to hallow His name, to bow to the sceptre of His holy authority, to do or to bear

* Deut. viii. 2, 3, 5.

His will. They speak of God suffering His people to hunger, and then supplying their wants, that they might learn to cease from their own efforts, and to depend on His promise alone. And this lesson was not for them only, but for His people in all generations; He dealt with them in this manner that they might know that *man* doth not live by bread only, but by every word of God." And it is to impress on *us* this lesson—to keep *us* in this spirit of dependence, that Christ teaches us to come to God for the supply of our temporal necessities, saying, as in the words before us, "Our Father, give us our bread."

This analogy may be pursued yet further. When God led His people out of the land of Egypt and through the Red Sea, He perfectly knew the difficulties that were before them. Six hundred thousand footmen were about to commence their march through the desert, and were almost utterly unprovided for their long and perilous journey. But under these awful circumstances He impressed

on them only the necessity of diligently hearkening to His voice, of doing that which was right in His sight, of giving ear to His commandments and hearkening to His statutes."* This was to be their care, the supply of their necessities was to lie on Him. He soon redeemed this pledge, and that in the most glorious manner. The provision which they had brought from Egypt, was exhausted, the multitude of Israel were in danger of death by famine, and the people asked in murmuring discontent whether this was the promised providence of their covenant-God. But they asked it hastily; that providence had not forsaken them. "I will rain bread from heaven for you," was His word, "and the people shall go out and gather it every day."† That word was also performed, He did so every morning for the space of forty years.

God's purpose in this singular dealing, was to teach His people to confide in Him; and never surely was that sacred lesson taught in

* Exodus xv. 24. † Ibid. xvi. 21.

a more deeply touching and affecting manner. For the manna fell every morning, and corrupted if kept to the next day. The people were thus compelled to use it within the day, and when night came, to lie down provisionless, depending simply on God's word for the morrow. How strikingly singular were such circumstances! To be aware of this, we have only to introduce into them suddenly one accustomed to live after the ordinary manner of men. Let Jethro be our example. He came, we are told, to see his son-in-law, and was hospitably received and entertained; "Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with him before God." * Jethro must have observed that there was no lack of anything,—that there was bread enough and to spare. But it would be only a natural question before he betook himself to repose, what provision have you in store for the morrow? Let us judge then of his amazement when his son-in-law replied, *there is not a crust of bread*

* Exodus xviii. 12.

in the camp. 'Can you lie down in peace,' he would ask again, 'encamped, thus without provision in the barren wilderness, and in the midst of six hundred thousand men?' Moses however would listen to such a question without either alarm or anxiety. 'My only care,' he would say, 'is that this people keep the commandments and glorify the name of their God; for temporal provision I take no thought, *we have had our bread to-day, and the morrow doubtless shall bring a similar supply.*' Though silenced by this expression of calm and holy confidence, we can almost fancy Jethro, in circumstances to him so singular and extraordinary, hardly taking rest that night. We can fancy him awaking with early dawn from troubled and uneasy slumber, undoing with trembling hand the curtains of the tent, and anxiously looking abroad. But his unbelief is reproved in a moment. He sees a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground; it is the people's DAILY BREAD, and they are already gone

forth to gather. 'Truly now I know,' he would exclaim, 'that Israel's God is worthy of all confidence, and that those are indeed blessed who put their trust in Him.'

Now the lesson which was thus taught to Moses and Israel, is just the lesson of this Divine model of prayer. The world teaches its votaries to make their own interests their first concern; to do so, is in the world's judgment the sign of practical wisdom. But Christ in this prayer, teaches the very opposite. He puts forward the name, the kingdom and the holy will of God, as the first objects of Christian interest; and though he teaches us to give our earthly wants a place, it is, as we have seen already, a secondary and inferior one. Nay it is the sign of practical wisdom to do so, for His words contain a pledge that we shall be no losers, but certain gainers, thereby. Having taught us to ask for the glory of God, He teaches us to ask for bread. Now when God bids us ask any thing, it is equivalent to a promise that it shall

certainly be bestowed.* These words of the Redeemer teach us therefore that the bread of *God's people* is as certain as His own glory; and that if we really seek the one, the other shall not be lacking. In the place of St. Matthew where this model of prayer occurs, this is expressed so plainly that none can fail to understand it. Having taught us as in this Scripture of St. Luke, after what manner we should pray, our blessed Lord enlarges on the impossibility of serving God and Mammon, i. e. of making both the glory of God and our worldly interests, the chief objects of our regard. He then counsels us to take no thought for our life, what we shall eat and drink, nor for our body what we shall put on; but to remember the fowls of the air whom God feeds, and the lilies of the field which God clothes with beauty. "Seek ye first," He adds, "the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto

* Mark xi. 24.

you." Here is a promise as distinct as ever was given to Israel; a pledge as sure as that which guaranteed the manna. So distinct is the promise and so sure the pledge, that our Lord goes on to reason—"Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." * In drawing near therefore to God as a Father, we are placed in precisely the same circumstances in which Moses and Israel were placed of old. For we may say without presumption, our only care is to glorify His name, to do His will and to advance His kingdom; we have no anxiety about temporal provision, we have received our bread to-day, and when to-morrow comes it will bring its supply along with it.

But faith was not the only lesson which this singular dealing was designed to impress on Israel; it was to teach them contentment also. Bread was the only provision promised, and the only provision bestowed. It came

* Matt. vi. 6—13, 24—34.

every morning, but neither fish, nor melons, nor garlick, nor any of the luxuries of Egypt, on a single occasion, came along with it. But the right-hearted of Israel, Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Caleb, Joshua, and their fellows, were contented with this simple fare. It was indeed only bread, but it came from the hand of love, the hand of their redeeming God. It came from Him who had smitten Egypt on their behalf, who had rolled back the Red Sea that they might go over dryshod, who had beckoned on its angry waters to return and overwhelm their enemies. His pillar of cloud was over them by day, to shelter them from the burning rays of the sun; His pillar of fire illumined for their sakes the darkness of each succeeding night; the ark of His covenant went before them to search out their way, as they journeyed through the trackless desert. Bread from His hand was better to them therefore than the daintiest fare which Egypt could afford; they partook of it joyfully, and praised the name of the Lord.

And the same lesson is impressed on the Christian by his great Master in this Divine model of prayer. For when He teaches us to ask for temporal provision, no mention is made of wealth, prosperity or luxury; we are told to ask for bread, and bread alone. And whilst this petition is our guarantee that bread shall not be lacking, it admonishes us to be content should nothing more be bestowed. But we have good reason for contentment. He to whom we pray, is our Father above—a Father who has redeemed us to Himself, and whose loving-kindness is ever with us. He is our light in the darkness of sorrow, our shelter in the heat of affliction, our guide and counsellor on the right hand and on the left. Better therefore is a little from His hand than a great deal from the hand of a stranger. This at least is the Christian's judgment. Satisfied with the light of the Divine countenance, he believes that he shall receive what is sufficient for his earthly pilgrimage, and is contented to receive no more.

These two features of the Christian character, faith and contentment, are always found together, and the same thing is true of unbelief and discontent. Israel in the wilderness is a remarkable illustration of this; the majority were unbelieving and discontented in their unbelief. When they first felt the want of bread, this unbelief broke forth in open murmuring; "Ye have brought us forth into the wilderness," they said to Moses, "to kill this whole assembly with hunger." * And though God met this unworthy suspicion by raining bread from heaven for them, though His fire gladdened them by night and His sheltering cloud by day, though the ark of His covenant went before them in all their journeys, they remained unbelieving still. They also despised these and all God's other mercies, and said in their discontent, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?—we remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and

* Exod. xvi. 3.

the onions and the garlick; but now our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all but this manna before our eyes." This perverse and rebellious humour was most fearfully visited. God gave them indeed their desire—"I will give you flesh," He said, "and ye shall eat a whole month." But He gave not His blessing along with it, for while they were eating, His wrath fell on them. A destructive plague was the expression of that wrath, and "Kibroth Hattaavah" i. e. *the graves of lust,* remained the memorial of His heavy displeasure.* And all this was for our admonition. For it is now as it was then, —"they are not all Israel which are of Israel." There are many now who though bearing the Christian name and professing to acknowledge God as a Father, have yet never learned to confide in Him, never found their joy in His presence, never sought their portion in His love. Instead of the prayer before us—"Give us our daily bread," their discontented cry is that of Israel,

* Numb. xi. 4—6, 16—23, 31—34.

"Give us flesh that we may eat." For they seek the world, its gains, its pleasures, its rewards. God may give them their desire, but the result too often is that, in obtaining what they "covet after," they "pierce themselves through with many sorrows." For "they that will be rich," says St. Paul, "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." So present was this fearful danger to the mind of the Apostle, that he adds immediately, "Thou, O man of God, flee these things." * And if we are men of God we shall flee them. For if the plague in the wilderness and the graves of Kibroth Hattaavah attested God's displeasure at sensuality and lust of old, there have not been wanting similar attestations since. This Apostolic warning has been verified in every age of the Church, nay is verified at this hour. Love of a present world has seduced multitudes from the faith of Christ, from the hope of

* 1 Tim. vi. 9—11.

salvation and the blessed ways of God; it has also consigned to everlasting destruction many who for a season ran well.

It is for us to see, then, that we are Christians, not in name only, but also in deed and in truth. If we are so, we shall be dead to a present world. We shall not be indifferent to its concerns, nor refuse the benefits of the good providence of God; but its place in our hearts will be subordinate, and we shall be content with such things as we have. If we are blessed with wealth, we shall hold it in trust for God; if we are poor, we shallt ake no anxious thought for the morrow, but seek first the kingdom of God, assured that He will provide. And whether we are rich or poor, the light of His countenance shall be our joy. Blessed are we if it is so with us! For these wilderness-wanderings shall soon be ended, the heavenly Canaan shall come in sight, and an entrance shall be ministered to us into that glorious and eternal inheritance. We shall then behold His face in righteous-

ness, who is now our Light in darkness and Comforter in trouble; He shall then also be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CARE FOR HIS ETERNAL INTERESTS, AND MERCIFULNESS TO ALL.

"When ye pray, say, Our Father . . . forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."

We have just remarked the Christian's care for this life, we have now to remark his care for the life to come; we have remarked his deadness to the world, we have now to remark that loving-kindness and tender mercy characterize his behaviour while he abides in it.

The words of Christ before us contain two things. He teaches His people first to ask pardoning mercy, and secondly in all humility, to submit a reason to their Father why He

should vouchsafe that mercy. We shall take up these points consecutively.

1. The prayer here addressed to God for pardoning mercy, has a most beautiful analogy to that which has preceded it—the petition for daily bread. The one respects our bodily, the other our spiritual wants, and both together comprehend all of which we can possibly stand in need. Both petitions are absolutely necessary. Let God withdraw His supply of bread, and nothing can save our bodies from death. Let Him withdraw His pardoning mercy, and that spiritual communion with Himself in which the life of the soul consists, is at once and for ever ended. Both petitions must be habitual. The bread of yesterday will not suffice for to-day, and neither will the forgiveness of yesterday; we need pardon as we need bread, day by day. Both petitions are addressed to the same Father; we look to paternal mercy for the supply at once of soul and body. This last consideration is most important, for it gives us the true meaning of

this prayer. It is not the petition of an unforgiven sinner, pleading that mercy MAY BEGIN; it would have been addressed, had this been the case, to God the Judge of all. But it is addressed to a Father i. e. to one who has already shewn mercy; it is the petition therefore of a forgiven child, pleading that mercy MAY CONTINUE. And this furnishes us with another analogy between these two petitions; they both ask for the continuance of past goodness. I received my daily bread from thy gracious hand yesterday; let me receive it to-day also, is the language of the first; I was forgiven of Thee yesterday, let me be forgiven to-day also, is the equally unequivocal language of the second. For in both petitions it is a child that speaks; in both petitions a Father is addressed.

It has been remarked of the former petitions, that they are the expression of faith and hope, and the breathing of love. The words before us have the same holy character stamped upon them. For they consist of two

parts, a confession and a prayer. And while the confession is dictated by love, the prayer is the language of faith and hope in God.

To ask for the forgiveness of sins, implies that we have sins to be forgiven. This petition then contains a confession; it acknowledges that we are sinners. Let us fix our attention on this mournful truth, *the Christian is still a sinner*. That the natural man should be a sinner, is no cause of surprise; Scripture tells us plainly that nothing else is to be expected from him. "The Lord looked down from heaven," says the Psalmist, "upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God; they are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one." * "We all" says the prophet, "like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." † "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles," says the Apostle, "that they are all under sin;" and

* Psalm xiv. 2, 3. † Isaiah liii. 6.

again, "there is no difference, for all have sinned." * But God's account of His people is a very different one. "He that eateth my flesh," says the Lord Jesus, "and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him." † And we are not left in doubt as to the meaning of these words. "I am crucified with Christ," says St. Paul, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." ‡ He also tells us what it is to be crucified with Christ—"that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." § It is destroyed to give place to the better life of Jesus. "For the law of the Spirit of life" adds the same Apostle, "hath made me free from the law of sin and death . . . that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." ‖ This is God's description of

* Rom. iii. 9, 22, 23. † John vi. 56.
‡ Gal. ii. 20. § Rom. vi. 6. ‖ Ib. viii. 2, 4.

the Christian. Christ died to set him free from sin; he abides by faith in Christ risen from the dead; Christ dwells in him also in the power of His eternal Spirit. It is therefore a matter of astonishment that *he* should be still a sinner, and demonstrates in the most affecting manner, how deep and dreadful has been the fall of the human race. It ought not to be so; sin should have no place in him. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked," * and He was without sin. But alas it is so; sin still has place in us, it cleaves to our thoughts and feelings, it mingles in our motives of action and marks all our behaviour. We cannot therefore sufficiently admire the grace of Christ our Saviour in putting the words before us into His people's mouths. For the confession which they contain, bids us not be amazed if we find the old nature still struggling for the mastery, while the petition tells us that if sin is not

* 1 John ii. 6.

cherished, but on the contrary confessed and lamented, we shall find God ever ready to forgive.

But I remark further that this is the confession of love, for love alone discovers, love alone confesses sin—the love that says "Our Father which art in heaven." Those who know not God as a Father, are unconvinced of sin, unhumbled and impenitent; they are so, simply because they have no love. Those who love God only a little, are humbled only a little; those who love Him much, continually deplore their short-comings. This perfect model of prayer contains therefore a confession of sin. Beginning as it does with an acknowledgment of God's fatherly kindness, and an expression toward Him of filial affection and regard, it would not have been perfect without it.

These considerations throw light on a question which has been much agitated in the Church. There are some who, admitting in the fullest manner their depravity as men,

yet profess to have attained to perfect holiness as Christians. Now it is a very serious consideration for such persons, that by the terms of their profession they are advanced beyond this prayer—they have no sins to be forgiven. And I would affectionately beseech them, that before they take so high a ground, they would consider what perfect holiness is, and deliberately weigh the question whether their profession of having attained it, does not itself prove them to be deficient. Perfect holiness fails in no duty to God, but renders to Him, even to the giving up of life, all the service, fealty, and obedience, which His love demands at our hands. It fails moreover in no duty to man, but renders to him also, to the giving up of life for His sake, all that the love of the Cross demonstrates to be man's due. And this perfection of duty can proceed only from perfect love—from love to the Lord our God with all our strength and mind, and from a love to our neighbour, as true, sincere and constant, as that which we bear to ourselves.

Those therefore who say that they have attained to perfect holiness, profess at once this perfect duty and this perfect love. But their profession hangs not together. They forget that love is sharp-sighted, that in proportion to its intensity it discovers defects in duty, and shews us where we fail toward a beloved object. Let us look at it in the family-circle, where it is nursed and cherished and expands itself, and especially when the loss of a beloved object—a brother, a sister, a parent or a child, increases the affection with which that object was regarded. How keenly in such circumstances does it reproach us with failures in duty—with not having rendered the many tender offices which now, we say, we should be only too happy to have an opportunity of rendering! And those who thus reproach themselves are not the really careless, the undutiful and the unkind. These, having no love, are conscious of no short-coming, and loudly proclaim that they have failed in no duty. The really dutiful, the loving, the affectionate,

whose patient attentions have been the admiration of all who observed them, are just those who accuse themselves; for love enhances the worth of the beloved object on the one hand and makes them sharp-sighted and severe in their judgment of their own behaviour on the other. This principle, as we all know, is true as regards man; the more that he is really loved, the less are we satisfied, in this imperfect state, with the duty which we are able to render to him. And we have seen already that it is equally true as respects the blessed God. Those therefore who proclaim that they fail in no duty either toward God or man, prove by the very terms of this profession that they fail in the first duty—the duty of perfect love. For that love if really attained, would not permit them to use such language. The blessed Apostle of the Gentiles speaks of himself, as not only before his conversion the chief of sinners, but as since his conversion and Apostleship, "less than the least of all

saints."* And this was no feigned humility. His life was indeed one of marvellous devotedness, and he laboured more abundantly than all his brethren. But he looked at that life with the eyes of love, and judged these labours with the judgment of love; he therefore found nothing to glory in but much to be continually deplored. And so shall it be with us; our unfeigned confession shall be in proportion to our love. Having learned, as in the beginning of this prayer, to say, Our Father, we shall learn also to bow the knee and to say in brokenness of heart, Forgive us our sins. The day indeed is coming when it shall be otherwise—when duty shall be perfect because love is also perfect, and when love itself shall discern no defect in duty. But that day is not now; we wait for it in faith and hope.

And the same faith and hope appear in this petition. In saying *Our Father,* we express our faith that God has forgiven us in

* Ephes. iii. 8.

the past; in saying *Forgive us our sins,* we express our confidence and hope that He will also forgive us in the future. There are many who draw the very opposite conclusion from these words. We can never, they say, *be assured* of the forgiveness of sins, for Christ desires us to pray for it! The ignorance of God and of His truth which such a sentiment implies, is indeed most mournful. Is prayer then the language of uncertainty? It is in truth the very opposite; the blessed Apostle bids us commit every thing to God by prayer and supplication, and then be without carefulness.* And carefulness can be banished only by confidence in the Divine faithfulness—assurance that God has heard and will also perform our petitions. Let us look at the other petitions of the prayer; there is no uncertainty about them. It is no matter of doubt whether the name of God shall be hallowed, whether His kingdom shall come, whether His will shall be done on earth; it is

* Phil. iv. 6.

no matter of doubt whether provision shall be made in His mercy for the earthly wants of His children. We have in His holy word the record of His sure and eternal purpose to bring in His kingdom and fill the whole earth with His glory; and the same word contains the gracious and faithful promise that His children's bread shall be given them, and that their water shall be sure. It is just because these things are certain, that we are encouraged to ask them, for their certainty enables us to ask in faith and hope. And it is the same with the petition before us; we are notasking an uncertai nty. The blood of Christ reveals God as a Father, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; and as that blood gives peace to the conscience, assuring us that God has forgiven us the past, it enables us also to look to Him with confidence, relying on the same forgiveness for the time to come. The petition before us is the expression of this confidence: we present it

"nothing wavering," no more doubting of pardoning mercy than we doubt of daily bread.

If the forgiveness of God even when sued for through the blood of Christ, were indeed a matter of uncertainty, how singular, how inexplicable would the whole structure of this prayer be! It teaches us to come before God as a Father, while for aught we know we are yet lying under His eternal sentence as a Judge! It teaches us to ask that His name may be hallowed, that His kingdom may come, and that His will may be done on earth, i. e. to prefer petitions whose fulfilment, for aught we know, may prove our everlasting destruction! It teaches us besides to think of our temporal wants, and ask for their supply, while yet we cannot tell whether our immortal souls shall be saved! It is only after we have thought and spoken of all these things that we think and speak of that salvation, and even then it is at hazard; we ask, but it is altogether doubtful whether we ever shall receive! Surely no one can for a moment imagine this

to be prayer—prayer dictated by the Blessed Redeemer. It is impossible to come to God as a Father, without having, in the first place, believed in His pardoning mercy; it is impossible to love Him and to devote ourselves to His service and glory till we have found rest on the momentous question of personal and everlasting salvation. We must also be well assured that a better bread is provided for us, before we can command ease of mind to seek the bread that perisheth. The prayer before us therefore, addressed as it is to a Father, and coming after petitions for the glory of God and the supply of our temporal necessities, cannot be the language of uncertainty, but must in the nature of things, be the expression of faith and hope.*

This however, I may remark, is true not

* The Liturgy, Litany and Communion-service of our Church very strikingly mark the Lord's Prayer as the language of confidence in the love and pardoning mercy of God. On every Communion-Sunday morning, this prayer is used five times. And let the reader mark the connection in which it occurs. First, just after the Absolution. Second, just after

of this petition only, but of all prayer. For prayer is fellowship with God; it is casting our wills into the current of His will; it is saying Amen to His purposes and His words of grace. He reveals His paternal mercy, and *our Father* is the response, the Amen of the believing heart. He declares that He will set up His kingdom over all the earth, and glorify His name for ever, and in asking that these things may be, we say Amen to the gracious purpose. He promises that our daily bread shall be supplied; we ask it, saying Amen to the promise: He assures us that He will pardon our sins; we ask Him to do so, saying again Amen to the assurance. This,

we have said, "I believe in . . . the forgiveness of sins." Third, just after we have prayed, "Oh Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world." Fourth, as we surround the table on which are placed the memorials of God's love to us in Christ. Fifth, when we have partaken of that bread and drank that wine which tells us that the body of Christ was given and His blood shed for our sakes. The Church bids us be encouraged by these assurances and memorials to call God "OUR FATHER." And yet many use the Lord's Prayer who say at the same time that assurance of God's love is unattainable!

I repeat, is true prayer—fellowship with the Father, the outpouring of filial love, the expression of the confidence of children.

II. The fifth commandment in the law and this fifth petition in the Lord's Prayer, have a similar distinguishing peculiarity; the one is the only commandment with promise, whilst the other is the only petition that has something like a condition annexed to it—"for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." God evidently meant in the one case to testify His especial approbation of filial love and duty; and the Redeemer in the case before us, seems to have had a similar purpose. He designed, we should say, to impress on his disciples and on His people through all ages, the exceeding preciousness before God, of the grace of forgiving mercy—that it is a more direct manifestation of His own character, and glorifies Him more in the eyes of His sinning creatures, than almost any other course of holy and Christian action. And in teaching us to present this Christian grace in

solemn memorial before God, He as evidently designed to remind us how large a boon we ask when we implore God's pardoning mercy —a boon so large that we may neither ask nor hope to obtain it, unless our consciences bear us witness that we are doing to others as we would that He should do unto us.

But what do these words mean? Does God really look down from heaven on the children of men, that He may bestow His pardon on those who have deserved it by extending mercy to their fellows—does the Redeemer teach us in the profession which He thus puts into our mouths, to go and practise this Christian virtue, and then on the ground of having practised it, to look for mercy from God? Surely not. He came to shed His blood that our sins might be forgiven, and could not mean to teach us to set His death aside. He could not mean to contradict His own teaching elsewhere, by representing our forgiveness of an hundred pence as the reason why we should be forgiven ten thou-

sand talents. Nor could He design to nullify the testimony of His own Spirit, which everywhere declares that we learn from the holy gospel the blessed lesson of mercy, and that it is *by being first forgiven of God,* that we are taught to forgive our brethren. The whole structure of the prayer most clearly indicates that this was not the Saviour's meaning. It has been already pointed out that the petition "forgive us," and if so, the profession "for we also forgive," is the language, not of an unforgiven sinner but of a forgiven child. The petitioner is one with whom mercy *has already commenced,* and he is imploring *its continuance.* And let us mark the argument by which he seeks to prevail with God. Thou hast forgiven me in the past, he says, and it is for the glory of thy name to continue that mercy for the future. For it has made me merciful, it has taught me gentleness and grace; under its benign influence I also forgive every one that is indebted to me.

There is no setting aside of the work of

Christ, no self-righteousness, no undue exaltation of the Christian virtue of forgiveness, in a prayer like this. God's forgiving mercy commences in the blood of Christ; it has its origin, its foundation there. We are ungodly when it is first extended to us; it was for the ungodly that Jesus died;* they are the ungodly whom God justifies.† To attempt to make ourselves godly in the first place and then to plead our change of character as a reason why God should forgive our past sins, is the vain attempt of self-righteous unbelief and can meet with no reward before Him. But the purpose of God in shewing mercy, is to make us godly—to transform us into His own perfect image of tender mercy and forgiving love. And unless Divine mercy accomplishes this gracious end, it cannot abide with us as our present and everlasting possession. For it cannot make us meet for his heavenly kingdom; "the pure in heart"

* Rom. v. 6. † Ibid iv. 5.

alone shall have the felicity of seeing God*. There is therefore a connection between the fruit of mercy brought forth in us and that mercy itself continuing. And there can be no self-righteousness in this connection being recognized—in our professing before God, if we can do so with a good conscience, thy love has made us loving, thy tender mercy has taught us to shew mercy to all. Mercifulness to others is here singled out, because, as already explained, it is a more direct manifestation of the character and glory of God than almost any other Christian virtue, and because mercy is the boon whose continuance we are asking for ourselves. And when we who are by nature unforgiving, can truly testify that God by forgiving us has taught us to forgive our brethren, we do present Him with a reason why He should still vouchsafe that mercy—the glory of His great name is advanced by its continuance.

The continuance of God's mercy then, even

* Matt. v. 8.

to those who trust unfeignedly in a Saviour's blood, is after all, it may be said, a matter of uncertainty, for it depends on a condition which must be faithfully performed by them. The conclusion is not an unnatural one if Scripture be examined superficially, but it is altogether unjust. They must learn indeed to keep God's commandments and to walk in His ways, but the blood in which they confide teaches them the sacred lesson. That blood provides at once for salvation and obedience —provides that they shall freely receive and also freely give. And thus two things apparently incompatible, are made to meet and harmonize in the glorious scheme of redemption. Salvation is by grace. Three words "Lord, remember me!" obtained it for the dying thief. And three words of hearty prayer in the name of Jesus will obtain it still; for "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." * It is equally true however that none can be saved without holiness. "Not

* Luke xxiii. 42, 43. Acts ii. 21.

every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord"—is the declaration of Christ Himself,—"shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."* And to the same purpose speaks His Apostle, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."† But there is a blessed link between these two things, which those who are ignorant of Divine love never can discern; and this ignorance perplexes their reasonings and vitiates all their conclusions. THE GRACE MAKES HOLY WHILE IT SAVES. For the gospel is not preceptive merely; it is the power and wisdom of God at once to save and to sanctify, and can no more fail in the one object than it can be disappointed in the other. We must not therefore be found saying, 'Besides looking to the Cross we must also, if we would be saved, learn to forgive our brethren.' For if we look to the Cross simply, and read the forgiveness of God there, it will teach us to forgive our brethren. Neither

* Matt. vii. 21. † Heb. xii. 14.

must we be found saying, 'It will avail us nothing at last to have looked simply to Christ, if we are not found also to have served and glorified God.' For if we are found at last to have looked simply to Christ, we shall be found also to have served and glorified God; He has joined these things together, and they cannot be put asunder. On this matter let us hear St. Paul. "We all" he says, "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image. . . . . even as by the Spirit of the Lord." * He does not say that we *ought to be* changed; it is not a matter of duty on our part, but of power on the part of God. In beholding the glory of the Lord we are the subjects of that power; the glory shines in the Cross, the Spirit reveals the Cross and makes it effectual to transform. The Saviour sheds abroad by that Spirit His dying love in our hearts. These hearts are melted by its power and impressed with His Divine image of love and pardoning mercy;

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

we look upwards with the affection of children, we look around with the eyes of brethren, doing good to all as we have opportunity, and forgiving every one that is indebted to us. It is thus that the Christian learns the blessed lesson of mercy—learns it effectually, learns it truly, and glorifies God also by its habitual exercise. And while he is conscious of doing so, he remembers that to the forgiveness of God he is indebted for the sacred lesson. He is thus enabled, not only without pride, but with the most unfeigned humility, to plead, as in the petition before us, that that paternal grace which has glorified God in him, may for the sake of the same glory, be continued to him for ever.

These statements are further borne out by the teaching of Christ Himself in this Divine model of prayer. We have seen the forgetfulness of self, the devotedness to the glory of God and the best interests of man, the holiness and the resignation which are expressed in the three first petitions; we have seen the

deadness to the world which is expressed in the fourth, and the tender mercy to all which is expressed in the petition before us. Now let it never be forgotten that Christ puts these petitions into the mouths of those whom He has taught to say *Our Father*. For this plainly reveals it as His judgment, that all who learn to call God by this endearing name i. e. really apprehend His Fatherly love and trust in His paternal mercy, will also be found thus devoted to Him, thus dead to the world, thus tender-hearted and forgiving after His perfect example. He teaches them therefore to say "for we also forgive." For He knew that in every age of the Church this would be a true profession—He knew that they would forgive. And the blessed Redeemer has not been deceived in this confidence; all who have tasted that He is gracious, do forgive; for the most atrocious wrong which man can perpetrate on his fellow, cannot harden the heart which His eternal mercy has softened. "They stoned Stephen,

calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And while he commended himself to Divine mercy, he exemplified that mercy in his dying behaviour, for the last breath of the martyr was spent in intercession for his murderers.* If we had met St. Peter as he retired from the presence of his risen Master and had just been assured of that Master's forgiveness for his threefold denial of His name; or met Saul the persecutor as he came forth from his dark chamber in Damascus, forgiven, reconciled and at peace with God, though the blood of Christ's faithful witnesses was scarcely dry on his hands—and implored the pardon of either for some injury inflicted, we should surely have found the same forgiving spirit. And the blessed gospel is not waxed old, it still teaches forgiving mercy, and that as fully and effectually as at the first. We have had many bright examples of this among the worthies of our favoured land. When that eminent servant of Christ,

* Acts vii. 59, 60.

afterwards His faithful martyr George Wishart, was preaching the gospel in the streets of Dundee at the dawn of the Reformation in Scotland, he discerned in the crowd one who had been hired to murder him. He had the murderer disarmed and secured, but the multitude rose to slay him, and the martyr's intercessions were unheeded. Throwing his arms therefore round his assassin, Wishart exclaimed aloud, "Brethren, stand back, he that seeketh his life, seeketh my life."

The words before us are so precious that we must not lose one of them. There is a natural placability in the kind and tender-hearted, but when it is mere human kindness, untaught from on high, there are always exceptions to the freedom of its exercise. The benefitted has wronged his benefactor; how shall I, says the benefactor, forgive so aggravated an offence? Or the offender has been repeatedly forgiven and has trespassed again; it is only an abuse of my clemency, is the complaint of the party aggrieved, I cannot forgive again.

Or there is something so peculiarly repulsive in the character and demeanour of the man who has trespassed against us, that we cannot bring ourselves to overlook his offence. But in Christian forgiveness there are no exceptions either of offences or parties offending. Let us mark the words—"we forgive EVERY ONE that is indebted to us." Christian forgiveness would not otherwise be what it is—*a following of God.* If He made exception of offences, where should we be? It is indeed an aggravated sin when the benefitted tramples on his benefactor; but it is just what we have done to God, and yet he forgives us. It is indeed an abusing of clemency to repeat a trespass which has been often forgiven; but it is just what we do every day, and yet we look for God's pardon every day. And again, if God made distinctions between offenders, what son of man could have hope? But He makes none. "Preach the gospel," said the Lord Jesus before He left the world, "to

every creature," * i. e. tell every creature of God's fatherly love; assure every creature that Divine paternal mercy waits to receive him to the embrace of the everlasting arms. All men indeed are not in the enjoyment of this mercy, but this is only because they PUT IT FROM THEM. The unbelief of man has put limits to salvation; the proclamation of God puts none. Though the prodigal should live and die among the swine, the paternal heart and paternal dwelling have all the while been open to him—though the whole world should perish everlastingly, the glory of an universal and undistinguishing amnesty belongs to the blessed God. And the Christian in this follows the Divine example. Well does it become him to do so. If God makes no distinctions among debtors of ten thousand talents, but receives the suit of *all*, it would ill become His children to make difficulties about debts of an hundred pence. But they

* Mark xvi. 15.

make no such difficulties; their charity is heaven-inspired and glories in forgiving all.

These statements must of course be understood with limitation; they describe only the general and habitual state of the Christian's mind. There are seasons when his own evil heart, an ensnaring world and a subtle adversary prevail to draw him aside—to make him forget the lessons of heavenly holiness and heavenly mercy which he learns from the blessed gospel. His Lord both contemplated and provided against this danger when He instructed His people to present the petition before us and also that which follows—"Lead us not into temptation." And the fatherly grace which is thus implored either preserves them from the danger, or restores them from its dreadful effects. Let not this then minister to the self-deceit of the man who, with the words "Our Father," on his lips, is yet found living in malice and envy and refuses to forgive his brother. His profession is hypocrisy; in the nervous and unambiguous

language of Scripture, "He is a liar, and the truth is not in him." * The mercy of God has found no real entrance into his heart, it is therefore not his portion here, and he shall have neither part nor lot in it hereafter. Professing as he does to have received it, he is like the servant in the parable who was forgiven ten thousand talents; his conduct is also like his, since for an hundred pence he lays hands on his fellow-servant; and his end shall be like his, for he shall be "delivered to the tormentors." Be it our earnest prayer then that we may have grace to forgive "from the heart," "every one his brother their trespasses." † So shall we be marked as the children of God in this world, and owned as such by the Father of His redeemed family in the longed-for day of glory.

* 1 John ii. 4.

† Matt. xviii. 21—35.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DISTRUST OF SELF AND DREAD OF SIN.

"When ye pray, say, Our Father . . . lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

We have seen the Christian's self-forgetfulness, we shall now see his self-distrust: we have seen his love to God and man, his care for his body, his care for his soul, we shall now see his dread of sin, that evil thing which dishonours God and is so ruinous to the interests of man, and which, if indulged in, will finally destroy both soul and body in hell.

Temptation is of a twofold character. It comes from God, and then it is simply trial.

He commands us to do His will in difficult and arduous circumstances, or He calls on us to bear it. Thus we read that "God did tempt Abraham." * Or it is solicitation to sin, and then it comes from the Devil. The latter part of this petition may accordingly be rendered, "Deliver us from the Evil one" —suffer not him who is emphatically "the Tempter," to take advantage of our weakness, so that we should swerve from duty, or of our sinful propensities to lead us into sin.

Scripture is full of examples of both these kinds of temptation. God tried Moses by calling him to do His will, and the trial found him wanting. He had been zealous before the time to deliver his brethren from bondage, but when the time came and the solemn and responsible charge of going in unto Pharaoh and bringing Israel forth from Egypt was laid on him, he shrunk back appalled. And though his objections were suc-

* Gen. xxii. 1.

cessively answered—his plea of unfitness, by the assurance that God would be with him: his fear of the people's unbelief, by having signs given him: and his alleged want of eloquence, by the promise that He who had sent him would enable him to speak: it required the positive exertion of Divine authority to induce him at last to proceed.* God tried Job by calling him to bear His will. The patriarch was great, prosperous and happy—he had "seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household." Nor was domestic felicity wanting; he had "seven sons and three daughters." "We count them happy which endure," says St. James—"ye have heard of the patience of Job." † And well might the Apostle connect his name with endurance! The Sabeans took his oxen and asses, the fire of God burnt up his sheep, the Chaldeans carried off his camels, the whirlwind of the

* Exod. iii. iv. † Jam. v. 11.

desert overthrowing the house in which they were feasting, destroyed all his children. And his cup of sorrow was not even then full. That last blessing which makes life a boon—the blessing of health, was taken from him. Smitten "with sore boils, from the sole of his foot to his crown," he sat down among the ashes, desolate, bereaved, miserable, and bewailed the day of his birth.* God thus tries what is in us when He calls on us to act, and tries us also when He calls on us to suffer. The memorable case of Abraham already referred to, is an example of both modes of trial. He was called on to suffer, for God demanded his only son; he was called on to act also, for besides surrendering, he was *himself to slay* the child. Well may it be said of that mysterious and awful transaction, that "God *did tempt* Abraham!" And if we regard that transaction as a sample of what temptation is, well may we pray, as

* Job i. ii.

Christ here teaches us, Lead us not into it, oh our Father!

The temptation which proceeds from the Devil, is also of a twofold character; it is addressed sometimes to our weakness, at other times to our sinful propensities. "Simon, Simon," said the Lord Jesus on the evening before His passion, "behold! Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." He sought to have all the eleven, but especially the Apostle whom Jesus now addressed. So ignorant however was he both of his own weakness and of Satan's power, that he protested at once and confidently his readiness to follow his Master not only to prison but to death. But that Master was not to be deceived; He knew the power of the tempter and the weakness of humanity too well. "I tell thee, Peter," was His reply, "the cock shall not crow before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." And within a very few hours his warnings were

fully verified. The eleven Apostles were indeed sifted when the time of trial came—sifted and found wanting, for "they all forsook him and fled."* And he who had spoken so confidently of going to prison and to death, fulfilled but too exactly his Master's prophetic words; forgetting not his Apostleship only, but truth and righteousness along with it, he denied three times with oaths and curses that he had ever seen His face! The memorable night before the crucifixion tells us thus most emphatically what Satan's temptations are; though he address only the sinless weakness of our humanity, he will overpower us if off our guard. And he has other temptations of a far more dreadful kind. He addressed the sinful avarice of Judas, and prevailed with him to sell his Master; he filled the heart of Ananias, making him lie to the Holy Ghost and keep back part of the price of his land.† He was the seducer, but

* Luke xxii. 31—34. Mark xiv. 50.
† John xiii. 2. Acts v. 3.

it was their lust which he addressed; that lust conceived and brought forth sin, and that sin when it was finished, brought forth death.*

Such being temptation in both its aspects, the petition, "lead us not into it," is evidently the language of self-distrust. We do not find the soldier imploring his general, Lead me not against the enemy. He has confidence in his own valour, and in the valour of his comrades, and is therefore impatient for the charge. And it would be the same with the Christian if he was confident in himself. Call me, Lord, would be his prayer, to any duty, however arduous; the more arduous it is, the more blessed shall be the opportunity of glorifying Thee by its discharge. Lay on me any trial, however heavy and protracted; the more heavy, the more protracted it may prove, the more shall I honour Thee by unmurmuring submission to Thy will. Let Satan have any advantage over my human weakness; my victory over him shall only be illustrated thereby:

* James i. 14, 15.

let him set sin before me and strive to his utmost to tempt me to its commission; I know that he shall not prevail. Lead me into temptation, oh God, that I may triumph in the hour of temptation. The Christian's prayer is just the opposite, because his spirit is the opposite—he distrusts himself. Call me not, he says, to arduous and difficult duty, lest I shrink in the hour of trial; lay not on me severe and protracted suffering, lest I repine and charge Thee foolishly; bring not my weakness into conflict with the enemy, lest that enemy prevail to Thy dishonour; suffer me not to be solicited to sin, lest in a moment of infatuation I be enticed and overcome. For I have no ability either to do or to suffer; nor can my frailty contend for an instant, with the power, the subtlety and the wiles of the Devil. It is no feigned humility which speaks thus, but the humility which Christ teaches. Nor was the present the only occasion on which He taught the lesson; He repeated it in Gethsemane in a manner

never to be forgotten. His soul was then sorrowful unto death in the immediate prospect of His passion, and He had come to His disciples, seeking the consolation of their sympathy. And when He was disappointed in this hope—when He found them asleep, He said with emphatic earnestness, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak."* All the words of Christ are precious, but these are above all price, for these were doubtless experimental words. Though more than sustained by the willingness of His devoted spirit, our blessed Master was conscious in that awful hour—conscious even to agony, of the weakness of His frail flesh. In that frail flesh He was then resisting the Devil who tempted Him to refuse the cup; in the same frail flesh bleeding at every pore, He was then glorifying the Father who had put that cup into His hand. But oh the dark temptation of that hour—the struggle be-

* Matt. xxvi. 41.

tween the weakness of nature and the willingness of love! That struggle was the agony which constrained Him to pray more earnestly; the secret of the great drops of blood which fell from Him to the ground. It was while that struggle continued that He gave this counsel to His followers. Ye know not, He meant to say, what temptation is, and I who now prove its power, bid you not desire to know it. Invoke not the hour of darkness; covet not the fearful strife. There may be light after the darkness, still invoke it not; there may be victory when the strife is over, still covet it not. Rather, "watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation," now and ever let your petition be, lead us not into it, oh our Father. What a sacredness of character does this impart to the petition which we are now considering! It is not merely, like the other petitions of the prayer, a part of the Redeemer's teaching; it is confirmed, sealed, and attested by that Redeemer's experience,—His experience on the eve of His

passion. Surely none who have heard the still, small voice which says "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," * will be found after such a lesson, desiring the hour of trial, or rushing uncalled of God into the perils of the spiritual conflict.†

* Matt. xi. 29.

† I beg to commend this view of the mysterious sufferings of Gethsemane (it is given more at large in the Meditationes Hebraicæ, pp. 340—343,) to the earnest attention of the Christian reader. The Litany distinguishes these sufferings from the passion, and I feel convinced that the ordinary view of the matter which would represent them as one, involves a most serious misconception. Let the Saviour be contemplated as tempted at the commencement of His ministry, by the offer of the kingdoms of the world, as refusing the temptation and embracing a life of sorrow and poverty instead; let Him next be seen at the close of His ministry, tempted to reject the cup, but refusing the temptation and going on to Calvary to drink it, all is plain and harmonious, all is to His glory. But if we learn to think of Him *as bearing penal wrath in Gethsemane*, we are confounding Gethsemane with Calvary, the garden with the Cross, and the practical consequence is *that the Cross is thrown into the shade.* St. Paul plainly teaches in Gal. iii. 13, that it was on the Cross He was made a Curse. The Cross then was the passion, the Cross was the cup to which Jesus referred in saying "if this cup may not pass;" for His own words in John xviii. 11, tell us that it was full in prospect and yet to be drunk when He left the garden. No form of statement which represents Gethsemane

We have found the former petitions of this prayer to be the expressions of faith, hope and love; and the same blessed elements of the Christian character are manifest in that which is before us now. Self-distrust is in proportion to love. He who loves God only a little, thinks it an easy thing to glorify His name; he who loves man only a little, thinks it an easy thing to fulfil his duty toward him. It is, on the other hand, of the very nature of love to enlarge our apprehension of duty—as this sacred principle takes possession of our hearts, we learn what the glory of God and the welfare of man alike and justly demand from us. We thus learn also to know our insufficiency, and to bewail our manifold shortcomings. And so far from coveting increased responsibilities that we may display

as the Passion or as the major part of the Passion, can possibly be made to harmonize with these inspired declarations. And though such statements are very frequently found in works of acknowledged excellence, they do not present this solemn transaction to the mind in the light in which God would have it regarded.

our fidelity in fulfilling them, or desiring to be led into trial that our holiness and truth may be made manifest, we pray in unfeigned self-distrust to be kept from the hour of temptation. Nor is this the only connection between these principles of the Christian character. Dread of temptation arises from dread of sin, and our dread of sin is in proportion to our love of God. The prayer of Agur expresses this in the most beautiful and striking manner. "Two things," he says, "have I required of Thee . . . give me neither poverty nor riches." He feared both as being circumstances of temptation—riches, "lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord"—poverty, "lest I steal and take the name of my God in vain." * Temptation was dreaded because sin was dreaded, and Agur dreaded sin because he loved God, for he said He is "my God." It is the same still. When we have learned to look up to Heaven, saying, Our Father; when that sacred

* Prov. xxx. 1, 8, 9.

name expresses also the depth and reality of our filial affection toward the blessed God, we dread sin because it dishonours Him and grieves His Holy Spirit. We dread temptation also, because it may entice us to sin. And bowing the knee, we send up the filial cry of this petition, imploring God of His paternal mercy, not to lead us into it.

Self-distrust however, even though prompted by love, is an imperfection rather than a virtue, if unaccompanied by confidence in God. But in the mind of the Christian it is not thus unaccompanied; his prayers are not the breathings of love only, but the language of faith and hope. If we take the petition before us as a whole, we shall find *it* to be so in a most remarkable manner. "Lead us not" we say, "into temptation, but (if we must be led) deliver us from evil," i. e. save us from being overcome, enable us to triumph. Here is, first, the language of distrust of self, secondly, of filial trust in God. I say *filial* trust, for the prayer "Deliver us from evil"

is addressed to a Father—that Father to whose faithful love the Christian has committed the interests both of soul and body. It is addressed to Him from whom to ask, is to receive; the Christian looks for victory in the hour of trial, as he looks for forgiveness and for daily bread. Whilst therefore he is not found seeking the spiritual conflict, neither is he found shunning it, if it comes upon him unsought. For He knows that a Father's gracious arm will sustain him, and that a Saviour's love will make him more than conqueror. St. Paul's description of the Israelite indeed is thus verified in his experience. He draws nigh to "God in the spirit" of adoption, and while he has "no confidence" in any ability or attainments of his own, he "rejoices" in the grace that is treasured up for him "in Christ Jesus." *

We have seen already the Christian's dread of sin, and this feature of his character will appear still more prominently when we pro-

* Phil. iii. 3.

ceed now to a more minute examination of his words.

They contain a prayer against evil. The difference between the worldling and the Christian, is exceedingly marked in their respective judgments of this matter. *What is evil?* Let us ask this question of the worldling. He enumerates in reply the manifold calamities, the disappointed hopes, the blighted expectations of this world of sorrow; these, he says, are the evils of life, and from these I seek deliverance. Let us ask the same question of the Christian, and take our answer from his prayer before us. "Lead us not" he says, "into *temptation*, but deliver us from *evil*." For temptation as leading to sin, is in his mind synonimous with evil. Sin then is evil in his estimate of things; sin is the object of his dread and aversion; sin is that from which he seeks deliverance. He prays in the former petition to be saved from its guilt, and in that which is before us now, he implores that he may be preserved from its

power. But this entire prayer contains not a single petition against sorrow—a single supplication for deliverance from the ills of life, save only as they may prove occasions of temptation, and thereby lead to sin. How deeply instructive is this—what matter does it furnish for the most searching examination of ourselves! Especially when we remember the comprehensive character of this prayer—that it was given by the Lord Jesus, to meet all the wants and express all the wishes of His people.

In this estimate of things however, we again discover the Christian—the man of faith, of love, of hope in God. Calamity and sorrow if patiently accepted as from the hand of our Father above, bring no dishonour to Him, nor harm in any wise to the interest of our neighbour. And so far from harming us individually, they are for the purifying of our souls, and shall certainly conduce, if they effect this blessed object, to our everlasting salvation both in soul and body. There is

nothing therefore in sorrow for love to be afraid of, nothing which faith and hope have any cause to dread. How very different is sin, whether regarded in its essential character or contemplated in its consequences! It cannot be indulged without dishonouring God, and in so far as the sphere of its influence extends, it brings deadly harm on man. Its effect on ourselves is that spiritual pollution which unfits for communion with the God of purity; and it will certainly, if finally victorious, bring everlasting destruction both on soul and body. Here then is every thing for love to hate, every thing for faith and hope to fear. Every thing for love to hate—for love teaches us to look to God as a Father, to cleave to every man as a brother, and to seek that Father's glory and that brother's welfare above all things, yea before our daily bread. Every thing for faith to fear —for faith believes God's registered word of vengeance, and conversing as it does with unseen realities, beholds that vengeance ready

to descend. There is every thing also for hope to fear. That holy principle gathers fresh energy from sorrow; as tribulation abounds, its blessed consolations abound.* It made the face of the first Christian martyr shine like that "of an angel" while his enemies "gnashed on him with their teeth;" † it constrained the persecuted Apostles to sing praises to God, while lying in the damp Roman dungeon with their feet made fast in the stocks.‡ But it cannot live for a moment in the noxious atmosphere of sin. "*Restore* to me the joy of thy salvation," § was the prayer of the penitent king of Israel; that joy had deserted him when he lay down on an adulterous bed. Do we ask then, I say once more, whether of the twain is evil,—sin, or sorrow? Love, which looks to God's glory, answers *sin;* faith, which trembles at His word, confirms the sentence; and hope, which lives on joys to come—those joys from which

* 2 Cor. i. 5.
† Acts vi. 15; vii. 54.
‡ Ib. xvi. 24, 25.
§ Psalm li. 12.

sin will exclude for ever, adds its solemn and deliberate Amen. This is the reason why the prayer before us implores deliverance from sin, but never mentions sorrow. It is the prayer of a Christian—of one who dwells in love,* who walks by faith,† who is sustained by hope continually.‡

Is the Christian insensible then to life's calamities—does he meet his own with stoical apathy, or look on those of his neighbour with cold-hearted indifference? Ah no; there was no such insensibility in Christ—no stoicism in Gethsemane, nor indifference to the sorrow of others at the grave of Lazarus. And as it was with the Master, so it is with His disciples. To know Him who agonized in that garden and wept at that grave—to enter into the holiest by His blood—to find our home and resting-place in that bosom in which He lay from everlasting, imparts a tenderness to the feelings of which the world knows nothing. This tenderness, inspired by

* 1 John iv. 15, 16. † 2 Cor. v. 7. ‡ Rom. viii. 24.

His gracious Master above, makes his own sorrows press with double force on the Christian, whilst the brotherly love which the blessed Cross has taught him, will not suffer him to be indifferent to the griefs of his fellow-men. But he looks at sorrow, whether his own or theirs, with the eye of faith, and sees it as the fruit of sin. Whilst the worldling therefore mourns over the effect, the Christian reserves his grief for the dreadful cause. And whilst the worldling seeks deliverance from sorrow, and rejoices when that deliverance comes, the prayer of the Christian for himself and all whom he loves, is that they may be saved from sin; he also reserves his joy for that deliverance when in the mercy of God it is vouchsafed. It is not therefore that he esteems sorrow lightly, for when he contemplates the inroads of calamity, disease and death, rivers of waters are ready to run down his eyes. But his spirit is oppressed by something yet more dreadful, and the sight of things as God sees them, gives these tears

a deeper cause—that men keep not God's law.*

I need not remark that the Christian's judgment in this matter, is confirmed by Christ Himself. Not to mention His teaching in the prayer before us, He has set His seal to its truth by the whole course of His holy example. When He was made flesh and dwelt among us, He shunned not our sorrows, but bound them to Him as a garment; He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." † But He eschewed all fellowship with our sins; He came into the world to bear witness of it that the deeds thereof were evil," ‡ and was Himself, while He dwelt on earth, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." § And as it was with Him in flesh, so it is with him still though exalted to the right hand of power. He assures us of His sympathy in our sorrows, the sympathy of an elder brother. But He

* Ps. cxix. 136.
† Isaiah liii. 3.
‡ John vii. 7.
§ Heb. vii. 26.

has no sympathy with our sins; they are the object only of His abhorrence and eternal malediction. No one then who has learned of Him, can hesitate for a moment whether sin or sorrow be the evil. That is not evil which the Son of God embraced; the cup which He drank cannot possibly harm His people. It may indeed be a cup of bitterness, but the wormwood and gall are medicinal, and in the everlasting enjoyment of spiritual health we shall soon forget the transient pain which procured it. That alone is evil which the Son of God rejected while on earth, from which He shed His precious blood to set us free, and which in heaven He repudiates and abhors. Such, I repeat, is the Christian's judgment. May God in His infinite mercy make it the judgment of us all!

It was remarked already that the last words of this petition are susceptible of another interpretation—"Deliver us from the Evil One." We may take this interpretation of them; it makes the connection between the two parts

of the petition more obvious and apparent, and confirms the lessons which we have learned from both. For the meaning of the petition will then be, Suffer us not to be tempted to sin, but, when we are so tempted, give us victory over the seducer. Now there are two ways, be it observed, in which Satan comes against us. He comes as a seducer; and if He finds us proof against his wiles, he comes (as God shall permit him) in violence and great wrath. The same "evil one," I need not observe, is manifest in both modes of assault, but the Christian is evidently fearless of his violence, for in the words before us he prays only against his wiles. This is not to be passed by, for it confirms what we have learned already, viz. that sin and not sorrow is the object of the Christian's dread. It does not need to be pointed out that the Devil, in the plenitude of his power and wrath, can bring upon God's faithful servants abundance of sorrow; he has done so when permitted, in every age of the Church. The

history of our Redeemer, for whom he prepared a cross of shame, and whom his malice persecuted till it laid him in a bloody grave, bears witness to this awful truth. And it has abundant confirmation in the history of His Apostles, Prophets and Martyrs, who at the instigation of the same malice, have been stoned and sawn asunder, tempted and slain with the sword, or wandered in fear of the persecutor, in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And that "Evil One" is unchanged; he is the same now as when he stirred up Cain to slay his brother Abel, and if he had his will in this apostate world, every servant of God would meet with Abel's recompense. I cannot therefore help remarking it as a most marvellous feature of this prayer—a prayer given by Christ to express all the wants of His people in a world where Satan sits enthroned, that it contains not a single petition for preservation from his violence. The woman's Seed in this marked omission, seems to pour contempt on his

malicious foe. Those whom He was now addressing, were shortly, as He well knew, to be exposed beyond all others, to the rage of this dreadful adversary; and yet in the petition before us, He says to them, as to all His people, *take heed only that he tempt you not to sin, you have nothing else to fear at his hand.*

The judgment of our gracious Redeemer in this matter is confirmed by the experience of the Church in every age. Powerful and terrible as Satan is, his violence has never done it any *real* harm. It has occasioned indeed severe and protracted suffering, but that suffering has always been forgotten in the blessing and abundant mercy which has followed in its train. He stirred up Pharaoh to persecute the seed of promise; the result was that the God of Abraham who knew their sorrows, led them forth in triumph from their house of bondage. He stirred up the Jews to slay the Lord's Christ; the result was the salvation of the world. He instigated the chief priests to stone Stephen and to perse-

cute the infant church; the result was that the faithful, scattered by their violence, "went everywhere preaching the word." * He roused against her at a later period, the whole power and strength of Paganism, and the unheard-of cruelties of the ten Pagan persecutions were the dreadful consequence: but the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church; she believed, loved, suffered and triumphed in the end. But when we come to speak of his seductions, we have, alas, a different tale to tell. The sons of Seth at his instigation, took the daughters of Cain into their bosoms; the result was a depravity so universal that the whole human race, save one family, were swept away. He seduced God's chosen people to mingle with the heathen and learn their works; the results were the Assyrian and Babylonish captivities, from the former of which the ten tribes have never yet returned. He put it into their hearts to reject and crucify the Son of God;

* Acts viii.

the result was their destruction by the hand of the Romans, and their dispersion as miserable wanderers, among all the nations of the earth. He seduced the Christian Church when finally triumphant, and laid her asleep in the harlot-embrace of the world; the result has been the Papal apostacy, the shame of Christendom, the dishonour of Christ. The Jew and deluded Romanist are thus living memorials of the success of Satan's wiles, and warn us to stand in fear of him when he seeks to seduce us to sin. If however we would see the contrast between the powerlessness of his violence and the dreadful results of his seduction, let us look at them when brought together—when that adversary, foiled in the one, has immediately had recourse to the other. When Israel were marching through the wilderness, his malice brought Amalek against them. But that malice effected nothing; the intended mischief of the heathen returned on his own head.* Israel after

* Exod. xvii.

Amalek's discomfiture, arrived at the foot of Sinai, and there at the instigation of the tempter, they made the golden calf. How different then was the result! The blood of three thousand men atoned not for their trespass, they were brought as a nation to the very verge of excision.* The same scene was re-enacted in the plains of Moab: their restless adversary brought Balaam to curse them. But his malice was again powerless; their God turned the curse into a blessing.† He next sought to seduce them by the charms of the daughters of Moab, and in this, alas, he succeeded. And the death of all who had been partakers in that shame, the ignominious slaughter of a prince of Israel, and the pestilence which came after, to glean those whom the sword had spared, attested but too emphatically the success of this hellish wile.‡ We learn the same lesson from the recorded experience of individuals. Satan did no harm to David by stirring up Saul against

* Exod. xxxii, xxxiii. † Deut. xxiii. 5. ‡ Numb. xxv.

him; he only tried his faith and patience, and fitted him for his intended throne. But who may tell the harm which he did, when he set the wife of Uriah before him? We read of the *first* ways of David;* let us tremble while we read; he never fully recovered from that deadly thrust of the enemy. The reason of this is so plain that it scarcely needs to be pointed out. Satan's violence against God's people only rouses a Father's jealousy and appeals to a Saviour's love; and if he who touches them, touches the apple of his eye, the issue cannot be doubtful. But by seducing them into sin, he brings down a Father's displeasure, grieves a Saviour's holy Spirit, and separates them from the communion of His love. It is not without reason then that Jesus in this petition, teaches us to pray against the Devil as a tempter and seducer only; he is not to be feared in any other character. This is the Christian's deliberate judgment. Love teaches him to think so, for it is faithfulness

* 2 Chron. xvii. 3.

to God which stirs up Satan's wrath, and love makes him willing to suffer. Faith and hope also confirm him in thinking so, for they tell him that in every time of need he may fall back on a Father's faithfulness, they remind him of his Saviour's guarantee, that not an hair of his head shall perish. *

Such then is this petition—the language of fellowship with God—the prayer of those who, looking on themselves as He looks on them, are aware at once of their own weakness and of the dreadful character of that sin to which they are so prone. This holy temper, the fruit of filial love expressing itself in the language of undoubting confidence and hope, exists in the Christian's mind in sweet and blessed harmony with that self-forgetting zeal, that resignation to the will of God, that deadness to the world, that mercifulness to all of which we have already spoken. For these are only different features of one perfect character, formed by Christ's Spirit in His people. And that character, as we shall see hereafter, is HIS OWN.

* Luke xxi. 18.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ROYAL DIGNITY AND INEFFABLE FELICITY, HIS SECURE TENURE AT ONCE OF TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS, HIS CERTAINTY OF FINAL GLORY.

"When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

We have meditated the character of the true Christian, as the several petitions of this prayer reveal it, let us now see whether any thing further can be elicited from its

general aspect. And if what we elicit seems to pertain to condition rather than to character, let us remember that in this case these are so allied that to separate them is impossible. The blessings of the condition belong to the character, being limited to "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." * Besides, the condition apprehended by faith, goes far to form the character; knowing his royal lineage and inheritance, secured in the possession of every temporal and spiritual blessing, and assured of final glory, the Christian is raised above the joys and griefs, the hopes and fears, the troubles and distresses of this present fleeting world.

"*Our Father, thy kingdom come.*" These words announce the Christian's royal dignity, proclaiming his father as a king, and himself as a kingdom's heir. And our Father *is* a King, for He is "Lord of heaven and earth." † He is Lord of Heaven, where His will is undisputed law; He is Lord of earth also,

* Gal. iii. 26. † Matt. xi. 25.

though earth has cast off His allegiance. We ask that this royalty may be acknowledged—that the usurper may be cast out—that the nations may be deceived no more—that the Lord may be "King over all the earth, one Lord, and His name one." * And this prayer shall yet be heard. They shall yet sing in Heaven that "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth;" † it shall yet be proclaimed aloud that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord;" ‡ universal nature, with its woods and fields and floods, shall yet make a joyful noise before the Lord THE KING.§ And the coming even of Jehovah in royal state, does not meet the fulness of this petition; His people must also be remembered. The kingdom is Christ's, for "all things," He Himself declares, "that the Father hath, are mine." || And being Christ's, it is His people's, for all that is His is theirs. He is the elder brother of that royal family of

* Zech. xiv. 9. † Rev. xix. 6. ‡ Ib. xi. 15.
§ Psalm xcviii. 4—9. || John xvi. 15.

which the Most High is the Father. The members of that family shall therefore in that day, be exalted beside Him, for they are heirs, as children, of their Father's royalty, and joint-heirs, as brethren, of their Redeemer's throne.* They pray now "Thy kingdom come;" they shall sing hereafter as they cast THEIR CROWNS before Him; "Thou art worthy," "thou hast redeemed us . . . . WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH." † Thus generously will the Father repay His children's love—remembering those who have forgot themselves for Him—shewing mercy to the merciful, and exalting the meek and lowly, while He casts the wicked to the ground.

But further, the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," can be addressed only to the great God, for His alone is "the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever." And that we, in approaching God in Christ, can add to this prayer, "Our Father which art in Heaven," proclaims in the most emphatic manner the

* Rom. viii. 17. † Rev. iv. 10, 11, v. 9, 10.

Christian's ineffable felicity—the great God of Heaven is his Father. The archangel veils his face before His royal majesty, the earth trembles at the look of Him, the doomed hosts of Hell are subject to His word, and yet the Christian can draw near to Him with the freedom of a child, with the unrestrained confidence of conscious mutual love! History tells us of a sovereign who, being waited on by the ambassador of a foreign power with all the state and form of court-ceremonial, was found on the floor of the apartment, playing with his children. The king was forgotten, in the father. And Scripture intimates the like condescension, amazing though it be, on the part of the blessed God. Speaking of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, the Apocalyptic seer goes on to say, "HE THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE shall dwell among them."* He shall lay aside the majesty of empire to mingle freely with His children;

* Rev. vii. 14, 15.

they also shall press to His paternal bosom, and find their chiefest joy in His fatherly, benignant smile. These words, in their fulness, refer indeed to the ages to come, when God shall manifest the exceeding riches of His grace, but His fatherly relation to us in Christ, be it ever remembered—that relation which gives them all their meaning, exists now. And the Christian has therefore, even now, the foretaste of this ineffable felicity. He enters his closet and shuts his door, and pours out his heart before God. And as he tells him in the confidence of love, of all his joys and griefs, all his cares and troubles, all his plans, purposes and intentions—as he seeks to Him for consolation and for strength, for guidance, direction and blessing, he finds that even on earth, in fellowship with "the Father of mercies" there is fulness of satisfying joy.

We learn besides from the petitions of this prayer, the Christian's secure tenure of every temporal and every spiritual blessing. All needed temporal mercy is comprehended, as

we have already seen, in the petition for daily bread, whilst every spiritual mercy is alike comprehended in those which ask for the remission of sin and victory over Satan. The Christian asks these blessings; but what assurance has he of receiving them? Not merely because he asks them of a Father, not merely because he is commanded to ask them, but because He who has commanded him, teaches him to ask along with them, "*Hallowed be thy name.*" For this plainly tells us that God's name *is hallowed in bestowing*—and if hallowed in bestowing, then also *dishonoured in withholding* them. It is hallowed in giving us our daily bread; it is hallowed in forgiving our sins; it is hallowed in enabling us to triumph over Satan. Our best interests are thus bound up with God's glory; in seeking the promotion of the one, we are seeking also the advancement of the other.

The truth of this statement is almost self-evident as far as temporal provision is con-

cerned. If God is a Father, it must be to His glory that His children's wants are supplied; His name must be dishonoured if they are left provisionless. And oh what consolation does this minister in many an hour of darkness! Whilst struggling with worldly difficulties and perplexities, labouring hard for our daily bread, and scarcely knowing where to find it, we are often tempted to think that our concerns are too insignificant to attract the notice of the Most High. And so they are in themselves. But the glory of God's name can never appear little in His eyes, and that glory requires that the minutest of these concerns be attended to. In carrying them therefore to Him, we are as perfectly assured of being heard as that He cannot deny Himself. This is the Christian's tenure of daily bread: and though he may be poor, bed-rid, friendless; though as he lies solitary in his lonely garret, he may not know to what quarter to look for the morrow's meal, the tenure is perfectly secure. For whatever in-

terest is bound up indissolubly with the glory of the great God, may be pronounced safe beyond the reach of danger.

The same remarks apply to the petition for the forgiveness of sin; we are asking that which it glorifies God to bestow. It glorifies His justice as the righteous Governor of the world; it glorifies His mercy and faithfulness as the loving Father of His children. God does not forgive after the manner of men, by sacrificing justice to compassion: compassion with Him is sanctified by justice, and justice is exalted while mercy has free course. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way;" it is because of this our fatal and universal trespass, that we stand in need of pardon. But One was found to say, "a body hast Thou prepared me, lo, I come to do thy will, O God."* The Lord laid also on that willing victim "the iniquity of us all;"† "He bore our sins, His own self, in His own body on the

* Heb. x. 5—7. † Isa. liii. 6.

tree." * And now justice is satisfied, law is magnified, and pardon—*righteous pardon* has free course for ever. This pardon is ours when we sue for it in the blood of Christ. And the justice of God is not only not dishonoured, it is positively glorified in bestowing it. For every sinner who is forgiven through the blood of atonement, is a fresh testimony to that Cross which magnified the righteousness of God; a fresh testimony to the Judge of all, that He "will by no means clear the guilty." † And as it is with Divine justice, so it is with Divine love and faithfulness; they are both glorified, when, through Christ, God passes by transgression. The love which appointed the sacrifice is glorified, when it rejoices to welcome the returning sinner; the faithfulness which promised the welcome is also glorified, when in God's infinite mercy that promise is fulfilled. When the prodigal "was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed

* 1 Pet. ii. 24. † Exod. xxxiv. 7.

him." The son said, "I have sinned," but the father upbraided not. "Bring forth the best robe," he said, "and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found." * This behaviour revealed THE FATHER. And as it is with man, so it is with the blessed God. He is glorified as a Father, a gracious and faithful Father—the Father who gave His Son to die for us and has promised to receive us in Him, when He bends His ear to our imploring cry for mercy, and instead of upbraiding for the past, does for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. It is therefore indeed our privilege to join these petitions in one—to say not only "forgive us our sins," but to say also "hallowed be Thy name." For FATHER is the most venerable of all the names of God,

* Luke xv. 20—24.

and that name is emphatically hallowed in shewing mercy.

The Apostle speaks of God's abundant willingness "to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel" to bless them. He tells us moreover who the heirs of promise are—those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them"—the mercy of God in a Saviour's precious blood.* What a striking illustration of the truth of these words is found in the petitions before us! We pray for mercy in the blood of Jesus, but we have most painful doubts, it may be, whether our prayer shall be heard. Our eternal happiness depends on the issue, but Satan and unbelief suggest that we have sinned away God's interest in our happiness, and that it is now forfeited to His long-offended justice. But the petitions before us are full of "strong consolation," * for they connect with our pardon something which cannot be forfeited, even the glory of God.

* Heb. vi. 17, 18.

They tell us that He who is glorified in shewing, would be dishonoured in refusing mercy. We feel at once the truth of this as far as we ourselves are concerned. Our consciences confirm what these petitions teach—that when we forgive others, we glorify God, and that when we refuse to do so, we dishonour His holy name. And this could not be true of God's children, if it were not in the first place, true of their Father Himself. Shall we dare to speak of Him refusing pardon to those who come to Him in the blood of Jesus? It were to unsay what He proclaimed on the glorious morning of the resurrection—it were to testify against that sacrifice whose sufficiency was then declared. It were to disown that love which gave His Son to die, that we the sons of men might have life for evermore. It were to break that promise which in Christ is "yea and amen."—"I will receive you and be a father to you;" * it were TO DENY HIMSELF. Lift up thy head, then, thou dejected

* 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

one! Hast thou made God in Christ thy confidence? Thy pardon then is sure, as sure as His glory; thou shalt not be confounded for ever.

Nor do these considerations lose anything of their truth and preciousness, when we apply them to victory over Satan. While we, the poor children of men, are struggling at disadvantage with that mighty One, unbelief tempts us to think that we are too insignificant for the great God of heaven to regard it. But it is not so. We are indeed little, but the glory of God is much, and that glory is concerned in the issue. His only-begotten Son took our flesh, met and overthrew that dreadful enemy—overthrew him in the wilderness, in the garden, on the Cross. And dwelling by His Spirit in the hearts of His people, He meets and overthrows him still. If that enemy assail us while looking away from the Saviour, the defeat is ours, the dishonour ours alone. But if He could overthrow us whilst trusting in a Saviour's grace,

Christ Himself would be defeated in our defeat, would be dishonoured in our fall. When His people were smitten, He said to him who smote them, "Why persecutest thou ME?—I am Jesus." * And shall He, Satan's conqueror, ever have occasion to ask him, Why hast thou deceived, why hast thou seduced, why hast thou led ME into sin? No; the glory of God forbids it—forbids it at once and for ever. "The name of the Lord" then "is" truly "a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." † Let us understand its strength, its safety. In hours of darkness and of trouble, when we enter our closet and send up the living cry, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," let us never forget to pray also, "hallowed be thy name." For in this blessed union is our pledge of victory—the glory of God in Christ and our final triumph are one.

And even this is not all. If when we asked bread, pardon, and spiritual victory, we

* Acts ix. 4, 5. † Prov. xviii. 10.

pleaded any thing of ours as the reason why God should hear us, we might well stand in doubt of the acceptance of our petitions. But Christ instructs us, when we come before our Father, to plead something that is His; to say, while we ask these blessings, "*Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*" And this plainly implies that it is the will of God to bestow them. Otherwise, the prayer were contradictory; we should be asking God that His will might be done, and then proceeding to pray against that will! If the prayer is not contradictory, (and Christ teaches no contradictions) it *is* God's will to bless. And oh! what a tenure of mercy, what strong consolation is in this one, this simple announcement! GOD WILLS TO BLESS US, AND THEREFORE WE SHALL BE BLESSED.

The unbeliever, I am aware, will not think this reasoning conclusive. His only idea of *will* is borrowed from the will of man, the most shifting, the most uncertain, the most variable of all things. And when therefore

he seeks to assure himself of mercy, he turns to something of his own on which he may anchor his hope. But the humblest Christian knows that this anchor is cast in the sand. The will of God is unchangeable, because His wisdom cannot err, and because His name is Love. He abides for ever THE ALL-WISE; it belongs to Him as God to be THE ALL-GRACIOUS; He cannot cease therefore to will to bless. His people know this and stay themselves upon it in their darkest, their gloomiest hours. Are providential dealings mysterious, have friends forsaken them, does earthly provision seem uncertain and precarious? Our bread shall not be lacking, is the cheerful language of faith; our Father's will secures it. Is the conscience burdened with a load of guilt, with the remembrance of sins more in number than the hairs of the head, or the sand on the sea-shore? These sins shall not be remembered, is again the response of faith,—it is our Father's will to pardon. Does Satan thrust sore that they may fall, and are they

tempted to say with David, we shall surely one day perish by the hand of this malicious foe? Faith answers, we shall never perish, it is our Father's will to bruise him under the soles of our feet. Blessed language of faith—may we learn to use it, saying with all our petitions, "Thy will be done!" We shall thus find the secret of contentment and peace here, and what will bring us hereafter to the possession of eternal glory.

The Christian's certainty of this glorious inheritance may also be gathered from this prayer. It commences, as we have observed repeatedly, with three petitions—for the hallowing of the name, the coming of the kingdom, and the doing of the will of God. And there is a connection between these petitions which we must on no account pass by; our Lord indicates it in the most pointed manner when He teaches us to say, in the parallel scripture of St. Matthew, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever." *

* Matt. vi. 13.

THE WILL of God is THE FOUNTAIN AND SOURCE of every thing, because His is the power; THE HALLOWING OF HIS NAME is THE END of every thing, because His is the glory; THE SETTING UP OF HIS KINGDOM is THE ISSUE of every thing, because His is the kingdom for ever. The will of God commands that this kingdom be established. His glory requires its establishment; and the same glory requires that His will have unimpeded course. It must then be established when all other kingdoms fall; and because the Christian's hopes are anchored in it, his portion is eternally secure.

These blessed verities can be apprehended by faith alone. We see in this fallen world the will of God resisted every hour; we see His name blasphemed; we see a foul usurper occupying His rightful throne. And the scoffer, judging by sense, says that all things shall continue as they are. But faith tells us that this is for ever impossible. When God said in the beginning, "Let there be light,

there was light;" * when "He spake, it was done; when He commanded, it stood fast;" † to suppose that this Omnipotent will can be permanently resisted, is to suppose God's throne overturned. Yea, resistance to it even now, must be in appearance only; it must be really gathering into itself all opposing influences, and constraining them to promote the accomplishment of its ulterior designs. Again, the glory of God is the object for which all things were made. They were created not "by Him" only, but also "for Him," ‡ and the condition of their continued existence, is that they hallow their Maker's name. One of two prospects then is necessarily before the world. It must either be brought into a condition of holiness, when "the Lord Jehovah shall rejoice in all His works," § or it must be everlastingly annihilated and destroyed. But we are in no difficulty which alternative to look for; faith

* Gen. i. 3.
† Ps. xxxiii. 9.
‡ Col. i. 16.
§ Ps. civ. 31.

tells us that God's purpose is not to destroy but to save. It thus enables us to expect with confidence the establishment of His everlasting kingdom; it assures us that His will, contemplating His glory as its end, is now ordering and conducting all things to bring forth that eternal purpose. Oh blessed consolation! St. Paul says of Christian hope that it is "an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast," and that it "entereth into that within the vail." * And these words correspond most beautifully with the prayer before us. To say "our Father," is to enter within the vail, for God's paternal bosom is the true "holiest of all." And when the Christian has found his way within that most holy sanctuary, on what does he anchor his hope? On the things which are there—the will, the glory, the everlasting purpose of God. These things are immoveable as the throne of God Himself, and His people's portion and inheritance is therefore safe for ever.

* Heb. vi. 19.

There is yet another way in which this blessed truth may be demonstrated. If the will of God must in the end be manifested as omnipotent, and carry everything resistlessly before it, the final portion of His enemies can only be utter destruction. But the same consideration tells us that those who are His friends—whose desires and aspirations are in unison with His eternal purposes, must be carried forward by the same resistless will, to glory, immortality and honour. And this just describes the Christian. He has cast his will into the current of the will of God, he has resigned himself to be fashioned and moulded according to a Father's pleasure. The Saviour's grace is also even now teaching him in spirit, in life, in conversation, to hallow that Father's name, and is thus preparing him for the kingdom of the pure in heart in which his children shall see God. What then can hinder his possession of it? Guilt cannot hinder, for it is forgiven in Christ; "it is God that justifieth—who is he that condemn-

eth?" Nor can an evil heart hinder; the Saviour is able to present His people faultles before His presence, with exceeding joy.* And if God's triumphant will cannot be hindered—be hindered either by death or life, by angels, principalities or powers, by things present or things to come,† no more may the blessedness of His people. They pray that this will may be done, and in the answer to their prayer is their recompense. It is done now in conforming them to His holy mind; it shall be done hereafter in putting them in possession of His glory.

If these things then describe the Christian —if the great God of heaven is his Father, if he is secured in the possession of every temporal and every spiritual blessing at once by the glory and by the will of God, and if the everlasting kingdom is his right-royal inheritance, we need not marvel that he should be given to prayer. His cup indeed runs over; God's holy anointing is on his head,

* Jude, verse 20. † Rom. viii. 38, 39.

goodness and mercy are pledged to him all the days of his life, and a place is prepared for him in the house of the Lord for ever.* It well becomes him then to love, to sing, to wonder; to forget himself and die to the world that he may live to God; to shew mercy as the child of the merciful, and to keep himself as the begotten of God, that that Wicked One touch him not.† It is such prayer that Jesus teaches; and in proportion as we are taught by Him, it will express the abundance of our hearts.

And let no one, not even the vilest, be discouraged, because they have no such heart, and feel that they cannot pray. Let me remind such of the language of God's children, as they kneel before His mercy-seat. They say "Our Father;" and these two blessed words declare not their love only but God's love also to the most abandoned of mankind. The same character belongs to the petitions. God's name may be hallowed in those who

* Psalm xxiii. 5, 6. † 1 John v. 18.

have wandered farthest from His ways, His kingdom may come in their hearts, His will may be done in their lives. His people pray that it may be so, because they love these prodigals, and they could not love them if One above had not loved them first. The prayer for bread is equally comprehensive; "Give *us* our bread" embraces the human family. And God answers that prayer in the experience of all men, even of those who forget Him. Surely this is a sign that He is equally willing to answer on behalf of all men, the prayer "forgive *us* our sins;"—to answer also on behalf of all men, the kindred prayer "deliver *us* from evil." Ye then who say, there is no hope, we have wandered too far from God to be ever again remembered by Him, read in the prayer of His children that His love is yet yearning over you. Let that prayer teach you that there is forgiveness for your sins in Christ, and grace to enable you to overcome the Devil—yea, that God's name would be hallowed and His will have free

course and be glorified, if you were now in possession of these unspeakable and eternal mercies. If you are not in possession of them, it is because you are resisting that will and refusing to give glory to the Lord your God. Resist Him then no longer, refuse no longer the honour that is due unto His name. Acknowledge the love which those who pray for you acknowledge, confide in the mercy which they implore on your behalf, look up to God as they look, and you shall learn with them to pray. And this is but a little thing, you shall learn also to pray with Christ. For this is His own prayer, the expression of His own devotion, as we shall now go on to shew.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIKENESS TO HIS LORD.

"And it came to pass, that as HE WAS PRAYING in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, TEACH US TO PRAY, as John also taught his disciples."

WE have seen what prayer is. It is being led into the holiest by the Spirit of adoption —that "Spirit of truth which the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him,"* and being there lifted up into the blessedness of "fellowship with the Father." We shall see now that it is fellowship also "with His Son Jesus Christ,"—that he who prays indeed, is not only unlike the

* John xiv. 17.

wicked world around him, but has the singular honour and felicity of being like the Lord of glory.

The evidence of this appears on the face of the Scripture before us. It was the sight of their Master praying which moved the disciples to prefer the request, "Teach us to pray." When He granted this request therefore, He taught them to do what He had Himself been doing. And it was not on this occasion only that He prayed; the Redeemer lived in prayer. It was His counsellor in difficulty, His comforter in sorrow, His stay in adversity and tribulation; "for my love," He says, "they are my adversaries, but I am *all prayer.*" * When the Father would vouchsafe that heavenly anointing which sent forth the Son "to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind," † Jesus, having been baptized, that

* Psalm cix. 4. Horsley. "All things must be fulfilled which are written *in the Psalms* concerning me." Luke xxiv. 44.

† Luke iv. 18.

He might fulfil all righteousness, was found praying. It was while He was thus engaged that "the heavens were opened unto Him;" it was while He bent in lowly supplication that the holy Dove descended on His sacred head.* When the Father saw good afterwards to grant to three favoured disciples a foreshewing of the Son's glory, Jesus prepared Himself by prayer for the heavenly attestation. For "He took Peter and John and James and went up into a mountain to pray," and it was "as He prayed," that "the fashion of His countenance was altered." † When the people pressed on Him to be healed of their diseases, and His fame had gone abroad everywhere, that meek and lowly One "withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed." ‡ When His enemies "were filled with madness," and took counsel against Him to destroy Him, "He went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer with God." § When

* Luke iii. 21, 22.
† Ib. ix. 28, 29.
‡ Ib. v. 16.
§ Ib. vi. 11, 12.

He desired to shew to His disciples that He must be set at nought and killed, He chose His opportunity when "He was alone praying;" prayer strengthened Him to approach the awful theme.* It was His strength also when that hour of darkness came, as Gethsemane and Calvary bear witness. His first act on entering Gethsemane, was to counsel others to pray against temptation; His second, to kneel down Himself, yea to fall on his face in prayer. But if He stooped so low, it was that He might rise a conqueror; "there appeared an angel to Him from Heaven, strengthening Him," and that evil One who had triumphed in Eden, was foiled in Gethsemane by prayer.† The triumphs of Calvary were also achieved by prayer. "My God, my God," shut "the lion's mouth" and saved the suppliant "from the horns of the unicorns;" they killed the body, but found nothing more that they could do.‡ Nor did Jesus live only,

* Luke ix. 18. † Luke xxii. 40—43. Matt. xxvi. 39.
‡ Psalm xxii. 1, 2, 21.

He also died in prayer. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," were his last words on earth; having uttered them, He gave up the ghost.* The disciples therefore on this occasion, saw only what was habitual, nay continual with their Lord. And in teaching them to pray in answer to their request, He taught them not a form of words but a manner of existence—to live to God as He did.

But we must go deeper into this sacred subject if we would understand it aright. Let us consider then what account we shall give of the mystery (for mystery it is) of JESUS praying.

Shall we escape from the mystery by denying it—shall we say at once with the Socinian that both Jesus and his forerunner taught their disciples to pray, because both, being weak and fallible creatures, had felt the need and proved the benefit of prayer? No; we should offend in saying so, against *the Saviour's*

* Luke xxiii. 46.

eternal Godhead. The testimony which the Church bears to Him as "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God," is only an echo of the testimony of holy Scripture. For it gives Him the name, ascribes to Him the perfections, and attributes to Him the works of God. "In the beginning" writes St. John, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* "They shall call his name Immanuel," writes St. Matthew, "which being interpreted is, God with us."† And St. Paul says more plainly than either, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of THE GREAT GOD and our Saviour Jesus Christ."‡ Eternity, Omniscience and Omnipotence are at once the perfections and the essential glory of Deity. And Scripture ascribes these perfections to Christ, for it declares him to be "the brightness of" that "glory."§ Yea we have on this matter His own testimony, which Scrip-

* John i. 1.
† Matt. i. 2, 3.
‡ Titus ii. 13.
§ Heb. i. 3.

ture also has recorded. In discoursing with the beloved disciple in Patmos, He declared himself as the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is and was and is to come;" as "the Almighty;" as the Searcher of "the reins and the heart." * And He suffered St. Peter to address Him, "Lord, thou knowest all things." † This glory of God is declared in the works of His hands, and Scripture, ever at harmony with itself, ascribes these works to Christ. It ascribes Creation to Him. "All things were made by Him," says St. John; "without Him was not any thing made that was made;" "the world was made by Him." ‡ "By Him were all things created," writes St. Paul, "that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible." He then enumerates among the works of the Saviour's hands, "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, adding another note of Godhead, that they were

* Rev. i. 8; ii. 23. † John xxi. 17.
‡ John i. 3. 10.

created not by Him only, but also for His sake.* Sustentation and Providence are ascribed to the same Savionr. It is said of "the Brightness of the Father's glory," that He upholds "all things by the word of His power;" † it is said of "the Image of the Invisible God," that "by Him all things consist." ‡ Those works of God which are yet to be accomplished, are also ascribed to Him. The resurrection of the dead to final judgment, unquestionably among the mightiest of the mighty acts of Deity, shall be achieved, as Scripture expressly witnesses, by the power of Christ. It is His voice which the unnumbered myriads now sleeping in their graves, shall hear; it is at His bidding that the unconscious dust shall come forth, to the resurrection of life or of damnation.§ Nay more; final judgment itself, that inalienable prerogative of Omniscience, pertains to Him alone. "The Father judgeth no man;" ‖ it is THE SON who shall welcome

* Col. i. 16. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ Col. i. 15—17.
§ John v. 28, 29. ‖ Ib. v. 22.

the righteous to the regions of eternal felicity, and who shall also doom the wicked to the penal and everlasting fire.* His Omniscient righteousness shall give the award and pronounce the sentence, His Omnipotent power shall carry both into execution. But it is needless to multiply reference and quotation. *Every expression denoting Deity which human language furnishes,* is employed by holy Scripture to designate the Lord Jesus. We must either therefore, in the language of the creed, acknowledge Him as "perfect God," or come to the strange conclusion that it was not the purpose of the inspired writers to reveal to us any God. And whatever explanation we may be able to give of the Scriptural fact, that He was given to prayer, this denial that it was a mystery, cannot for an instant be admitted.

Shall we say then that though He never needed on His own account to pray, He did so, as our example? The sentiment is con-

* Matt. xxv. 31—46.

tradictory; one who never needed to pray, could have been no example to us, for we need to do so, every hour. Besides, we should offend in saying this, against *the reality of His human experience.* "In the days of His flesh," says St. Paul, "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death." * And surely these words are not written of One who never needed on His own account to pray! Surely such an One was not found saying "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul, I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me; hide not thy face from thy servant, draw nigh unto my soul and redeem it." † And again, "Oh Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee, for my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave." ‡ Surely the sup-

* Heb. v. 7. † Ps. lxix. 1, 2, 17, 18.
‡ Ib. lxxxviii. 1—3.

plications of Gethsemane when the sufferer fell on His knees and afterward on His face in agony, and found no relief save as "He prayed more earnestly"—surely these supplications, I say, were not as an example to others merely! Surely the cries of Calvary, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me—thou art He that took me out of the womb—be not far from me, for trouble is near—deliver my soul from the sword—save me from the lion's mouth" *—surely these cries were not designed merely to teach others to pray! God forbid that we should think so—that we should thus blaspheme the Saviour. There was no fiction, we may be assured, about his experience; it was of all realities the most real, of all solemn verities the most solemnly awful and true. For we may remark, as on the former head of doctrine, that *every expression which human language supplies to denote trouble, extremity, and the most urgent need of help,* is applied by holy Scripture to

* Psalm xxii. 1, 9, 20, 21.

the circumstances of the Saviour, and the exercises of His holy soul. And we are therefore shut in to the conclusion of the creed that He who was "perfect God," was also "perfect man," and needed, as man, to pray.

Shall we say then that the manhood was the only part of the Saviour which prayed? No; we should offend, in speaking thus, against *the Unity of His person.* To her confession of His Godhead and manhood the Church is careful to add that "He is not two, but ONE CHRIST." It was this one Christ who prayed, the same Christ who now sits enthroned above. For while God *as God* cannot pray, while man *as man* cannot occupy the throne of Deity, He to whom Godhead and manhood at once belonged, humbled Himself for our sakes to pray on earth, and has now re-ascended, in our humanity, to His native seat in Heaven.*

* There is, I am persuaded, an unconscious vagueness of idea on this subject, in the minds of many serious and devout Christians. They think of the Unity of Christ and the Unity of God as if they were unities of the same nature.

One word of Scripture makes the whole mystery plain. "Ye know," says St. Paul,

Now while both unities are perfect, their nature is altogether different. The Unity of God, as I need not say, is that of THREE DISTINCT PERSONS *in one indivisible essence.* I say distinct, because to each of the sacred Three is attributed what belongs to, and marks a person, viz. the power of distinct action. The Father sent, the Son came and died, the Holy Ghost descended at the Jordan and on Pentecost. What proves these acts distinct, is the simple consideration, that we cannot attribute them indifferently without "confounding the Persons." But the Unity of Christ is that of *two natures* IN ONE INDIVISIBLE PERSON. And to speak of distinct action therefore in His case, i. e. to say that sometimes the Godhead acted by itself and sometimes the manhood, is to revive the heresy of Nestorius and divide the Christ, for distinct action declares a separate and distinct person. But we acknowledge, it may be said, that the manhood was the only part of the Saviour which suffered. And we acknowledge the truth, for suffering is not necessarily personal; on the contrary it may be and most frequently is local. It is personal only so far as this, that the whole person from its unity, sympathizes with the bruised part, (1 Cor. xii. 26.) This is evidently true of the sufferings of our blessed Redeemer. There was no "conversion of the Godhead into flesh;" *it* therefore could not suffer, His manhood only was bruised. But because His whole person sympathized with the bruised part, we say both scripturally and philosophically, that the Son of God suffered. Now it is quite otherwise with action, as the word indeed expresses. There is much more than sympathy; the whole person is actively engaged. A part is capable of *suffering* but totally incapable of *action.*

"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." * HE WAS RICH. For "being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yea "the Word was God." † HE WAS RICH. The infinite strength, wisdom, and power of Godhead—the wisdom that spanned the heavens, the strength and power that laid the foundations of the earth, were all His own. HE BECAME POOR. Not that He laid down His Deity or these essential attributes of Deity; either was impossible. But having taken part of the flesh and blood of the children whom He came to save, He condescended for a season, that He might be in all things like unto them, not to avail Himself of that Divine strength, and not to put forth that Almighty power. He was in consequence begirt with human weakness, weakness as real as their own. And when sorrow came, when suffering pressed, when trouble followed trouble in rapid and fearful succession, He, though

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † Phil. ii. 5. John i. 1.

the only-begotten Son, condescended, as in the scripture before us, to lift up the eyes, to bend the knee, and to send up the cry for help. Well may St. Paul call this "THE GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ!" For His voluntary emptiness was as real as His eternal fulness. He descended into our condition, into the fellowship of our creature poverty, that He might lift us up to His condition, the sonship of God and everlasting glory.

The mystery of Jesus praying, is therefore in other words, what the Church has so well defined in her solemn litany, as "the mystery of the holy incarnation." The purpose of incarnation moreover, as we have just stated it, is confirmed by that Apostolic sentence to which we have now been referring. For having reminded the Corinthians that the rich One had become poor, St. Paul states the reason of this amazing grace, "that ye through His poverty might be rich." He who was rich, took our poverty that we might take His riches, i. e. the Son of God became a son of

man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God. This holy act was a reality, for there is no fiction in the acts of God. His Son became really one of this human family. His flesh was human flesh, of the substance of His mother; the blood that circulated through His veins, was also human blood. He was moreover conditioned, with the exception of sin alone, just as we are conditioned. The life which he had taken, was every instant renewed by breathing, was daily sustained by food, and night by night was invigorated and refreshed by sleep. And, to repeat in other words a statement already made, that He might be in all things like unto His brethren, He took their spiritual as well as man's natural life. For He lived on earth as His people live, and served God as His people serve Him, and passed through trial as His people pass, by faith and hope and prayer. He declares this Himself in His answer to Satan in the wilderness. "If thou be the Son of God," said the tempter, "command this stone that it

be made bread;" for if thou art, Divine power belongs to thee, and thou canst give this proof of it with ease. Jesus in His answer did not deny that Divine power belonged to Him; neither did He deny that what the tempter had just proposed, would have been an easy exertion of that power. But tacitly admitting both, He simply said, "*man* shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." * I have come to earth now, was His meaning, not in the glory of the Son of God, but in the lowliness of man; for my errand is to teach man by my example, to believe in God, to glorify and to serve Him. My Father has promised to supply my present need, and instead of following thy counsel and calling bread into existence, I will repose on His faithful word. The tempter retired, and that faithful word was fulfilled, for "angels came and ministered to Him" who had made it His confidence.† Now this reply, like the prayer of the scripture before us, gives us the

* Luke iv. 3, 4. † Matt. iv. 11.

character of the whole life of the Saviour. He ever acted thus, always declining to put forth His own hand or to exercise His own power, always consenting to depend and to receive. It was *His grace*, I repeat, *His free grace* thus to act. He to whom, as the eternally-begotten and well-beloved Son, the Father had given "to have life in Himself," * and whose word shall at last communicate life to the dead of all generations sleeping in the tomb, could easily, without the adventitious aid of either breath or food or sleep, have sustained that human existence which He had been pleased to take. The essential power of Deity would have carried Him with equal ease through trial, and enabled Him without the aid of either faith or prayer, to have finished that work on earth which the Father had given Him to do. But He would have been conditioned in such a case, *as no son of man is or can be conditioned*, and have held human life in circumstances so entirely pecu-

* John v. 26.

liar that it would not have been veritable human existence; there would, in short, have been *no real incarnation,* He would have been *only apparently* a man. Let no one therefore despise this demonstration, or turn from it as speculative and unpractical, for its issues are of infinite moment. Not to mention that in the case which I have ventured to suppose, the Saviour could never have been touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and could never have been our example either of faith, its triumph, or its reward, something if possible yet more vital, is concerned. Our hopes of everlasting glory are indissolubly bound up with all which has just been set forth. If He took our poverty that we might take His riches, every thing depends on the reality of the assumption; if it was in appearance only in the one case, it will be in appearance also in the other. If in short, he had been aught else in body, soul and spirit, than veritable and "perfect man," we never could have been to all eternity, THE VERITABLE SONS OF GOD.

We have yet however to show how the exchange is perfected—how we take the riches of Him who assumed our poverty. The incarnation of the Saviour was not His only act on our behalf; it led to His Cross and passion, His precious death and burial; and these again were followed by His glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost. And in all these acts He has prepared our way to glory. For He bare our sins in His Cross and passion; He died for us to remove the sting of death; He lay down in our grave to make it the bed of rest and the portal to immortality. He has risen also and gone up on high, that we may know that God is pacified in Him and waits to receive us as a Father. And He makes all this mercy ours by uniting us to Himself by the Spirit. We read in the holy gospel, that when the disciples were within, the risen "Jesus stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you,"—that he said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy

hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing;"—that Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God." * The manner of the risen One is still the same. He shews His wounded hands and side. He manifests Himself as that heavenly friend who has loved us and given Himself for us; He speaks peace to our troubled consciences; we trust in Him, we embrace, we cleave to Him as our Saviour and our God. And as our hearts are thus opened by His love, He pours into them the Holy Ghost, more abundantly to console, to cleanse, to sanctify, to seal us as His own for ever. We are thus made one, *by the Spirit,* with Him who was one with us *in flesh;* "abide in Me," are His words, "and I in you;† and again His Apostle witnesses, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit." ‡ And because we are one with Him, all that is His, is ours. His atonement is our pardon, His resurrection is our acceptance, His Father is our Father, and

* John xx. 26—28. † Ibid xv. 4. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 17.

His God our God. It is thus that Jesus gives power to become the sons of God.* When He took the one flesh of man, and when the one blood which is the life of that flesh, circulated through His sacred veins, He became a member of this human family, a real son of man. And when we are united by faith to Him who is the Son of God, when He abides also in our hearts by that spirit of love and holiness in which is the life of God, we become members of the Divine family, the real sons of God. There is no fiction in either case; the exchange is real, when we believe in the Saviour's name. He took our guilt, our shame, our sorrow, our condemnation also, our death, our grave; we take His righteousness, His glory, His joy, His everlasting acceptance, His endless life, His ALL.

To pursue this blessed subject further; Christ in thus making us sons of God by the Spirit, necessarily forms in us the hearts of sons, and forasmuch as that Spirit is His own,

* John i. 12.

He as necessarily forms in us His own character. As St. Paul plainly teaches, "God hath sent forth *the Spirit of His Son* into your hearts, *crying, Abba Father.*" * Here is the filial cry, the breathing of the filial heart, the expression of the filial character; here is also the cry of the Spirit of Christ, the breathing of a heart like Christ's heart, the expression of a character moulded after that of the Son of God. Now this brings us back to the consideration of this Divine model of prayer. It is a filial cry from first to last; Abba Father is stamped on its every petition. We have also already recognized it as the expression of the character of Christ's people, let us now seek to recognize it as the expression of His own.

It requires no research to do so; every line is full of the Saviour. The opening address and the three first petitions especially reveal Him, not merely as He was in this world, but as He was in eternal ages, in the Son's blessed resting-place, the Father's bosom.

* Gal. iv. 6.

Abba Father was then His cry, His cry from everlasting, for He loved and was loved before the foundation of the world.* This love moreover was mingled with prospective affection for us the children of men—affection which rejoiced from eternity in the purposes of the Father's mercy toward our favoured race. "Jehovah possessed me" are His words, "in the beginning of His way, before His works of old; when He prepared the heavens, when He appointed the foundations of the earth, when He gave to the sea His decree, then I was by Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth, and my delights were with the sons of men."† He knew that this earth should fall from its allegiance, but our redemption was before His eye, and His Spirit even then went forth in holy zeal for the Father's glory, and longing desire for its accomplishment. Ages before He was born of Mary, we find it breaking

* John xvii. 24. † Prov. viii. 22, 27—31.

forth by the mouth of David, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire;—lo I come to do Thy will, O God." * That will was His obedience unto death. And He longed to do it, that the objects dearest to His everlasting love might be accomplished, even the hallowing of the Father's name, the winning back to Him of man's allegiance, and the setting up over all the earth, of His glorious and eternal kingdom. And when He did come at length on this sacred errand, taking flesh of David's daughter, He stamped our humanity, in assuming it, with His own Divine and perfect image. Incarnation therefore changed Him not, it only revealed THE EVERLASTING. There was indeed a change. He left the hallelujahs of adoring myriads above for the blaspheming tongues of men below; He left the peace and rest and blessedness of heaven for the disquiet, trouble and sorrow of this wretched earth; the Prince of life bowed His head in death and descended into the darkness of the

* Psalm xl. 6—8.

grave. But His zeal abated not, nor was His confidence for an instant shaken, for it was the zeal and confidence of everlasting love. That everlasting love had made Him willing to descend into the depths, and because it cast out fear, it made Him willing to abide in them. He had trusted in Jehovah from eternity, when all around was peace; He trusted Him still, when all around was trouble—"Abba Father" was heard amid the darkness of Gethsemane; "My God, my God!" amid the desertion and horrors of Calvary. We cannot doubt for a moment what would be the first desires, the prayers of such a heart. He had come into the world that the Father might be glorified and Satan's kingdom overthrown; He was living in the world for nothing else; He was about to give His precious life for this alone. And surely then these would be the objects which on the lonely mountain-top, or in the privacy of the sea-shore, or in solitary places apart, He would remember in His communings with God. Surely He who was

always the example of His own precepts, did not bow the knee and say, My Father, without saying in spirit at least, first of all, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth." He would add also "as it is in heaven," with an emphasis of meaning which we cannot conceive, for He had seen it done in Heaven—He had seen it the joy of the myriads round the throne.

The next petition expresses deadness to the world, combined with filial confidence in God that He will supply our wants while we abide in it. And taken in either aspect, it reveals the Saviour equally with those which have preceded. For the world had no charms for Him. He consented to abide in it for a season, that He might do the Father's will, but He was utterly dead to its allurements. Not that He was unacquainted with them—its kingdoms and glory were shewn to Him by the tempter, and pressed on His acceptance, but He rejected the offer with abhorrence. He had bodily wants, though the Lord of

glory; and so had His disciples, for they had forsaken all to follow Him. But while prodigal of miracles to relieve those who waited on His teaching, He acted uniformly on the principle on which we found Him acting in the wilderness; for He never wrought *one* to supply His own necessities. In all things the perfect example of His people, He cast these on the providence of His Father, looking upwards for Himself and for His disciple-family, that their wants might be supplied. And that providence never failed Him; it had supplied Him in the wilderness, it supplied Him to the end. "Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna and many others," had it put into their hearts to minister "to Him of their substance." * And it augments our horror at the wickedness of Judas, to remember that the bag whose contents that sacrilegious traitor appropriated to his own unhallowed use, was filled with these very offerings, the

* Luke viii. 3.

contributions of the faithful for the earthly wants of our Redeemer.

As the prayer proceeds, the Saviour still appears. If the petition which follows, expresses the Christian's sense of the value of his immortal soul, it is superfluous to remark that none knew that value as did the Lord Jesus. We remember His words, "What shall a man give in exchange for His soul?" —what is he "profited if he gain the whole world and lose" it? We remember His acts still more;—He died Himself, that the souls of men might live. But the petition, "Forgive us our sins," expresses more than this, even love's confession of unworthiness, and faith's supplication for pardon, and so is altogether unsuited, it may be said, to the lips of the Holy One of God. It is unsuited indeed if we regard Him as an individual. But we must not so regard Him: He was the Head of His disciple-family, whom He was training in the knowledge of God and in lessons of

* Mark vii. 37, 38.

Divine mercy; He was, yea He is, the Head of His body the Church, who have been privileged from generation to generation, with the same sacred tuition. And no words can express His perfect oneness with those to whom He stands in this endearing relation. The Christian poet expresses something of it when He says of the disciples—

> "They His followers with the rest,
> Had incurred the wrath Divine,
> And their Lord, with pity prest,
> Longed to bear their loads and mine.
> Love to them and love to me
> Made Him love Gethsemane."

But Scripture goes a great deal farther. In one of the most solemn of the Psalms—a psalm applied by the Holy Ghost to the Redeemer, we find Jesus bowed down before the Father in secret, and well nigh overwhelmed under a sense of His people's sins. And let us read and wonder; He confesses them as His own. "MINE INIQUITIES have taken hold on me" is His language, "so that I am not able to look up, they are more than the

hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." * Surely He who made such a confession, would ask for the forgiveness of that which He confessed. And so far therefore from conceiving this petition to be unsuited to the Saviour's holy lips, I should rather say that in teaching it to His disciples as He himself was rising from prayer, He instructed them to make for themselves that confession of sin which His love had just been making in their name, and to ask for themselves that mercy which He, as one with them, had just been imploring on their behalf. He would also implore this mercy with perfect confidence of obtaining it, for He could indeed add to His petition, "*We* also forgive every one that is indebted to us." He could say this in His own name. For He was then in the world, the Lamb of God among wolves, yet manifesting to that world, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." † He proclaimed among

* Psalm xl. 12. † John i. 14.

those who thirsted for His blood, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out;"* He knelt at His betrayer's feet and washed them;† He said of those who nailed Him to the tree, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."‡ But His death was the grand manifestation of this mercy of the Saviour. He did indeed shew that He forgave every one that was indebted to Him, when on the hill of Calvary, He "gave Himself a ransom for all." And His righteousness covered His people; He could plead all this before the Father, as the reason of their forgiveness. He could say it in their name also as their Head and Saviour. For though they were full of sin and imperfection, they were the subjects of his grace. He was their surety to a forgiving God, that the mercy now implored on their behalf, should never be abused to the purposes of sin. He was their Surety that in being made partakers of it, they should also be changed into its

* John vi. 37. † Ib. xiii. 2—5. ‡ Luke xxiii. 34.

image, and being followers of God as dear children, should shew it forth in their behaviour to all. This petition therefore, *in its spirit*, well becomes the Saviour. Its estimate of the value of the soul, its sin-confessing love, its believing prayer, and the holy mercy which breathes in it, are all worthy of the Son of God.

We come now to the last petition; it reveals Him who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart," * Him also who "was holy, harmless and undefiled." † It is a mark of that love which "suffereth long and is kind," that it "vaunteth not itself," and "is not puffed up;" ‡ and Jesus was that love personified. Though faith assured Him of continual victory and triumph, He never courted the spiritual conflict, or rushed, uncalled, into spiritual peril. And when He was called to enter into it, He set us the example of girding on the armour of God; when he was called to meet it, He triumphed in the Father's strength.

* Matt. xi. 29. † Heb. vii. 26. ‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

Let us contemplate Him at the commencement of His ministry, when the Devil found Him in the wilderness. He had not gone thither of His own accord; He "*was led up of the Spirit* to be tempted of the Devil." * Neither had He gone without the armour of God. That armour is His word and Spirit. And Jesus "*being full of the Holy Ghost,*" † used *that word* against the tempter and triumphed over Him by its power. ‡ Let us contemplate Him at the close of His ministry, when the same adversary sought Him in Gethsemane. He found Him watching unto prayer. It was by prayer also that on that awful occasion He triumphed, for His cry pierced the heavens and brought the strength of God to His relief. All this reveals the meek and lowly heart which is expressed in the petition before us. It reveals the heart of Him who instead of boasting in the hour of trial, prayed that if it were possible, the cup might pass away from Him. And it reveals equally that holy

* Matt. iv. 1. † Luke iv. 1. ‡ Matt. iv. 3—11.

One who made no account of sorrow but eschewed all manner of sin—who was content to sweat blood but not to disobey—who in the hour and power of darkness, yielded His body to Satan's violence, but yielded not His soul for an instant either to his seductions, his threatenings, or his wiles.*

It is not without reason then that this Divine model of supplication is called *the Lord's prayer*. It is not only the prayer which the Lord taught; it expresses also His own holy mind and desires. We find in it *His* faith and hope, *His* love and zeal; it expresses *His* deadness to this world and care for the world to come, *His* mercifulness, purity and meekness. To pray at all aright therefore, (if this *be* the model of prayer) is to have fellowship with the Son of God—to love what He loved, to desire what He desired, to seek what He sought, to hate what He eschewed. If we hope another day to learn His song in

* Luke xxii. 39—46.

heaven, we must seek now to learn His cry on earth.

And if prayer be thus the expression of character, we have the Christian presented to us in the most interesting of all aspects, as one who in spirit and temper resembles the Lord Jesus. Does he look up to God as a Father with confidence and hope; does he know Him also as the object of His love, of his dearest and most cherished regard? In this he follows Him who lay in that Father's bosom from eternity, and ever so regarded Him, ever rejoicing in His Fatherly love, ever delighting in His paternal smile. Does the Christian in trouble make God his refuge and hiding-place, does he glorify His Fatherly name by betaking himself, when in extremity, to the shelter of His paternal arms? In this again he follows Him who, in such trials, perils, and extremities as we can never know, when He was shut up on the right hand and on the left, and no way of escape was found, glorified the Father's faithfulness by a confi-

dence which nothing could shake. Is it the hour of the last conflict—is the Christian entering the valley of the shadow of death, and while heart and flesh fail, is he able to say, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me?"* In this also he follows Him who, when his heart failed in dark Gethsemane, turned to the same refuge—"I am not alone," He said, "the Father is with me."† He had said to the disciples just before, "Peace I leave with you, MY peace I give unto you." ‡ And blessed be His name, the legacy is indeed HIS peace. For that which cheered the darkness of Gethsemane cheers still the Christian's parting hours, even the light of the same Father's countenance and the comfort of His conscious, blessed presence. Has the Christian learned to love his fellow-men with a pure heart fervently, for His sake who sent His Son to die for them? Has He learned to forget his personal and earthly interests, that He may seek God's glory and their ever-

* Ps. xxiii. 4. † John xvi. 32. § Ib. xiv. 27.

lasting life? In this too he follows his Lord. For the Father's glory and our salvation were dearer to Jesus than life itself. "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar,"* was the language of His life of love, and of His death of pain and shame: for He was that sacrifice, a willing sacrifice for us. When the Christian is constrained to descend from such heavenly communing to earthly things, does he ask only daily bread, is he contented to receive no more? Such a mind is fellowship with Him who might have possessed the kingdoms of the world but rejected them—who had only food and raiment while He dwelt on earth and never sought for more abundant provision. Is it the Christian's most earnest desire, while esteeming this world so lightly, to be found prepared for the glorious world to come, and has he learned under the impulse of this desire, to bend the knee to God for pardoning mercy? He enters in doing so, into the mind of Him who so

* Psalm cxviii. 27.

esteemed that mercy that to obtain it for us He shed His precious blood—who prayed on earth that it might be ours, and now intercedes above. Is the Christian able to bear witness, as he asks this boon, that he also forgives every one that is indebted to him? He indeed in such a case, has begun to resemble the Saviour; it is Christ's own kindness which through him is manifested to men. Do meekness and lowliness appear in his behaviour to all? These lessons, by the Saviour's own testimony, are especially learned of Him* —learned from His example. And finally, if the Christian is found fearing sin, eschewing evil and watching against the wiles of the Devil, it is a following of Him "who did no sin," and hath left us "an example,"†—a following of that holy Saviour who could say from first to last of His life of blameless love, "the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." ‡

How immeasurably exalted then is the

* Matt. xi. 29. † 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22. ‡ John xiv. 30.

character of the true Christian! We are told in the holy gospel that Gethsemane was a frequent resort of Jesus and His disciples, during the period of His public ministry.* And the Christian poet says most sweetly—

> "Here they oft conversing sat
> *Or might join with Christ in prayer;*
> Oh, what blest devotion's that,
> When the Lord Himself is there!"

Our hearts answer, Blessed indeed! But these words are Catholic—every Christian joins with Christ in prayer; of every Christian's devotion it may be said, "JEHOVAH SHAMMAH," the Lord is there. He is with His people in the closet, in the family, in the sanctuary; their prayers are the inspiration of His Spirit, the expression of His desires, and come up before the Father, not as their petitions only, but as those also of His beloved Son. They must therefore be answered abundantly, yea returned on the heads of those who offer them in showers of eternal

* John xviii. 3

blessing. And the same thing is true of the Christian, when he leaves the closet or the sanctuary to mingle among men. Because the spirit of His Saviour dwells in him, he feels as that Saviour would have felt, judges as He would have judged, and acts as He, if placed in the same circumstances, would have acted. While the Father sees the image of Jesus reflected from his secret heart, the world sees it reflected from his life and conversation; his light shines before men to the glory of His Redeemer above.

Let us then take the place of the disciples, and sitting at the feet of Jesus, let us say to Him, Lord, teach us to pray! Shew us the Father, reveal thy love in our hearts, give us thy good Spirit, make us like Thyself. He who granted the prayer of the disciples, will grant ours also. He will shew us the Father as our Father: He will reveal Himself to us as our Saviour and elder Brother: He will put His Spirit within us, He will take possession of our hearts as His own. From the impuri-

ties, contentions and janglings of this present evil world, we shall retire into the secret of His presence and make our abode there. And when this world shall give place to the brighter world to come, ours shall be the felicity of the pure in heart, WE SHALL SEE GOD.

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